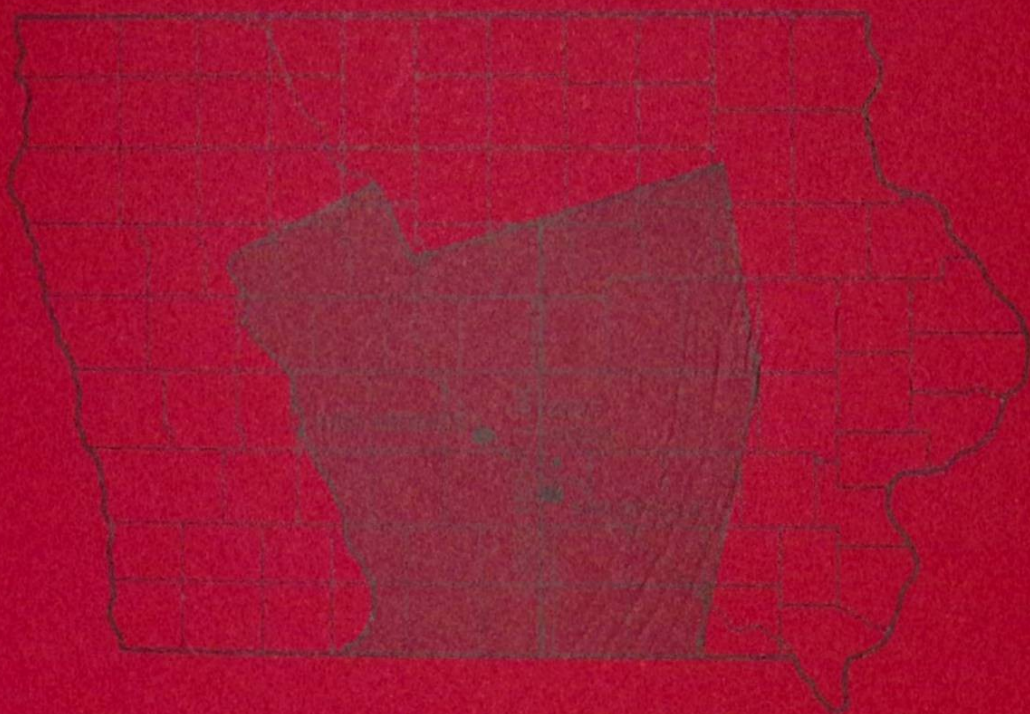


Red Rock, Iowa

Annals of a Frontier Community
1843 - 1969

by
Harriet Heusinkveld



The New Purchase, 1842

JACK ROUSE ASSOCIATES

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Harriet Heusinkveld
1993

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SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SOURCES

It would not have been possible to obtain the information for this book without having had access to the *Knoxville Journal* of September 25, 1930, Jubilee (75th anniversary) Edition. Comprising 92 pages, it portrays in considerable detail information concerning events and currents of thought of those 75 years, as well as the establishment of institutions such as schools, churches, political parties, and newspapers. A number of old settlers were contacted by the newspaper, people who had lived through most, if not all, of the area's span of history, and their reminiscences form the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle which is Red Rock's early history. Never again would it have been possible to obtain many of the items related. It is the best anniversary edition I have seen.

The Red Rock area is well represented in the Jubilee Edition because it is older than Knoxville, and its historical events impacted upon Knoxville, and its people filled positions of leadership in that part of the county.

Lois Akins, genealogist from Knoxville, was of immense help to me in locating and supplying me with historical items filed in her large well-organized collection of area family writings, obituaries, and newspaper clippings.

Larry Mikesell, Cedar Falls, sent me materials concerning his Uncle John H. Mikesell's family including Larry's own well-written research on this notable Red Rock family, items from a number of newspapers, family photos, John Mikesell's last will and testament, and other papers.

Edgar Van Arkel, Pella, who taught in the Red Rock School for the last six years of its existence, generously supplied me with photos, student newspapers, and anecdotes of school happenings.

Mr. and Mrs. Earl Martinache and Joan Martinache VerSteeg, Knoxville, in addition to furnishing me many insights on life in old Red Rock and photos, drew maps, giving visual insights of old Red Rock as they knew it.

Dorothy Templeton (Mrs. Hugh), rural Knoxville, shared two fascinating journals *The Cabin* and *Eliphalet Benton Ruckman*, written by family members, and photos, and general information concerning the town and put me in touch with various ex-Red Rockers.

Blanche Templeton (Mrs. James), rural Knoxville, furnished information concerning the ancestral Templeton families and the large farm and house they lived in.

Ruth Perkey, (Mrs. C. L.), Knoxville, who had both attended and taught in the Red Rock School, not only shared her own photos and news items on Red Rock but got in contact with other ex-Red Rock people to get materials from them. She was a good source for insights concerning the Red Rock church.

Mary Beary Hindman, Pleasantville, who taught in Red Rock just one year, (1940) shared her views concerning Red Rock and its people, as only an outsider could, and related experiences about teaching in Red Rock.

Mrs. Frances Mason, Pleasantville, shared a family journal which carried the account of early Red Rock schoolteacher, Isabelle Haynes McCollum, and her tragic death.

Dr. Joe Woods, retired Drake University professor, Des Moines, told me a good deal concerning the Red Rock store operated by his wife's grandmother, "Grandma Reed" in the 1930s.

Arthur Nichols, oral historian of the area, grocery store operator in the 1940s, and Reorganized Latter Day Saints elder who conducted many funeral and other services in the Methodist Evangelical Church when it was without a pastor, supplied interesting historical items.

Diane Nichols McDonald, rural Knoxville, furnished information concerning the church, and the Ruckman Cemetery.

Dale and Loretta Bumgardner, Leighton, retired Red Rock farmers, supplied information about Marigold Springs and the various stores in Red Rock.

Mrs. Cecil Price, Red Rock correspondent for the *Knoxville Journal* for several years, furnished me with a few of her columns, some of which I used almost verbatim for this history, as well as photos, and papers.

Susan Ruckman Eggert, Colfax, great great granddaughter of Amos and Amanda Ruckman, furnished late information concerning the Ruckman cabin as well as biographical information about John and Joseph Ruckman and put me in touch with a useful book *A Beautiful Life and its Associations*.

Bill and Darlene Karr, Monroe, filled in as well as corroborated information, especially about the town as they knew it in the '30s and '40s. They proofread my manuscript and identified pictures.

Jean Visser McKay, Knoxville, shared wonderful photos of her parents, John Martin Visser and his English bride, Harriet Hayton Visser.

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Maxine Cooper Alley furnished me with information about the Alley family.

Bob Jones, rural Knoxville, provided information on Union School and wonderful photos of the Ruckmans.

Clyde and Wilma Core, Pleasantville, supplied history on the Core families in Red Rock.

My brother, Willis Heusinkveld, Centerville, Iowa, discovered a recently written book (1993) on early Red Rock, *I am Bound for California*, in a Nebraska bookstore.

Mary Goff, Knoxville, presented me with a copy of her father, E. O. Osborne's book, *Scrapbook of Poems and Comments*.

Madeline Vander Zyl, Pella, lent me her copy of a Farm Abstract for land once owned by the Harps, the Core families, the Vander Zyls, and others.

Sarah Jane Templeton Roetman gave me a copy of her sister's poem on the Red Rock bluffs.

Gerald A. Jewett, Des Moines, supplied information of his ancestor, George Anson Jewett.

Alice Carlson, Pella, patiently helped in proofreading and editing.

Again and again, I turned to items I had gleaned from Grace Karr's "Cordova News" columns, 1927-67, in the *Pella Chronicle* in order to authenticate dates, events, family relationships, etc. Grace Karr wrote not only about Cordova but Red Rock, too, as these towns were only a mile apart, and those who lived on the farms between the two might almost as well be regarded as being from the one town as the other.

I am grateful to these people for their contributions and their friendship.

INTRODUCTION

Red Rock. Unique, dramatic, famous, historically significant as it was, the story of its propitious beginnings and its sudden disappearance from view is in the process of being forgotten. So it is with much of Iowa history, and a need is felt of rescuing whatever information is still available.

Red Rock was an exuberant, boisterous, often violent frontier settlement located on the border between whites and Indians. It was the first town in Marion County, and the largest for some time, and the most exciting. Some remarkably resourceful, able people located there. As is said, "The best people emigrated" (from Europe). Those who came to Red Rock had faith and high hopes for the future of the town.

But misfortune after misfortune struck the little town. Nature, which had seemed so beneficent, dealt it cruel destructive blows. The people's hopes of becoming an outstanding steamboat port were dashed; devastating floods ended their hopes of becoming the State Capital as well as posing many other problems; promises of a railroad melted away; and the loss of a market for their unique red sandstone combined to destroy the high hopes Red Rock settlers had had for becoming a flourishing metropolis.

Within a few years of its establishment, Red Rock began a slow decline. One last hope flared up when in the 1940s and 1950s, the U. S. Congress voted to build a dam just above Red Rock which would protect them from devastating floods in the future and perhaps put them in a favorable position for conducting business with tourists visiting the great lake which would be formed.

However, Congress changed its decision to build the dam upstream from Red Rock in favor of building a dam to be located about 10 miles downstream from Red Rock. It was a fateful decision foisted upon the Red Rockers, as they called themselves, for it signified doom for their beloved town and community.

This is the story which will be told—one which deals with great historic events, such as wars and depressions as well as small community and family events—the good times and the bad times.

It is most of all about the people who lived in Red Rock during its 120 years of settlement and how they adjusted and coped with problems of building their way of life amid problems presented them by Nature and by political and historic events in the Nation.

Part I of the book deals with life in the 19th century in Red Rock. Most of the material was gleaned from written materials—letters, newspapers, journals, books, personal diaries, and histories.

Part II deals with life in Red Rock in the 20th century. Very little was written about Red Rock during this century—Red Rock was no longer the important center it had once been and little news was reported, for example, in the Knoxville newspapers—except perhaps in times of floods. Therefore, oral sources—personal interviews with people of all ages—provided the materials for piecing together a 20th century history.

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PART I

Red Rock in the Nineteenth Century

Chapter 1

THE RED ROCK SITE

Red Rock's Location and Boundaries

Red Rock was located in Red Rock Township, Marion County, Iowa, on the north side of the Des Moines River, about 25 miles downstream from the City of Des Moines. The town occupied the higher part of the Des Moines River bottomland. On the north it was bordered by bluffs up to 60 feet high.

Red Rock included the urban area platted into blocks where houses, public buildings, and businesses were located. As in the case of most small Iowa towns in days gone by, it also encompassed the rural area a mile or two in each direction, the farm area whose people traded in Red Rock and looked to Red Rock for services such as school and church. Those people had a Red Rock post office address.

An important part of the Red Rock trade area was made up of the farms just south across the river in Union Township. Red Rock's boundaries were certainly not sharply delineated. On the periphery, some people looked to the opposite direction from Red Rock and carried on part or all of their business in a neighboring village, as for example, at Dunreath, 3 miles northwest of Red Rock or Cordova, 1 mile to the east.

Red Rock's Physical Setting

The River and the River Bottomlands

The site where Red Rock later came to be was a magnificent display of primeval beauty when white men first saw it. The broad Des Moines River flowed slowly and serenely through the area, often making huge loops as it meandered from bank to bank trying to find the course of least resistance. As the waters swung into the banks and cut them back, they were continually expanding the bottomland along the river and covering it with rich soil.

One of these meanders was cut off from the river in 1847, when a great ice jam choked with driftwood blocked the meander, and caused the river to cut a new channel northward. The deserted loop became what geologists call an oxbow lake, but Red Rockers always called it the "Old Slough." It was a

delightful place for water sports—fishing, swimming, ice skating, ice fishing in winter—and best of all it was so accessible, just south across the bridge.

The Des Moines River waters were clear and pure. It was said that it was possible to see the many kinds of fish along its bottom, so clear that white men were later to see little Indian boys easily killing the fish with their spears.

The Primeval Forest

Huge trees rose to great heights in the virgin forest. Giant oaks, wild cherry, walnut (which for many years was to find its way into many beautiful pieces of furniture), hickory, basswood, elm, black maple, and many others, all topped with a thick crown of green, comprised a glory which will never be seen again in the Red Rock area.

One tree which towered above all others and achieved historical significance was a giant sycamore tree just south of what was later to become the town of Red Rock. In fact it bordered the original channel of the river. It was said to be 84 feet tall and had a diameter of 12 feet, and thus a circumference of 40 feet. It was the second largest sycamore in the country, exceeded only by a sycamore tree in Ohio (*Trees of America*, 1973:79). Field investigators of this tree conjecture that a sycamore tree of this size may have been 400-500 years old.

The Indians could easily locate the site of Red Rock by sighting this tree, and it became a meeting place for the Sac and Fox Indians as well as for Indian and white fur traders. The Dragoon soldiers who scouted the land in the 1830s used it for a landmark.

I remember seeing this very old sycamore tree in the early 1950s as I was driving with four college students over a little country road to Red Rock. We were so amazed at seeing such a huge tree that we had to stop, get out and inspect the tree, even to join hands to try to stretch around the tree, but we could not reach around it.

When Lake Red Rock was formed in 1969, the tree was surrounded by lake waters and has since been slowly rotting away. Its stump may still be seen when the water is not too high, just west of the north end of the Mile Long Bridge on State Highway #14. People still come to look at it.

Early pioneer, Dr. W. H. H. Barker of Harvey was so impressed by the beauty of the trees of the area that he retired early from his medical practice and worked for 32 years laboring day after day on his little acreage near Harvey. He gathered and replanted young trees and shrubs of every type native to the Des Moines River area in this county. He wanted to establish an arboretum and thus leave a heritage for those of future generations who love Nature as he did.

Dr. Barker said of his arboretum in 1932, "I only hope my efforts will give children more comprehension of Nature's beauty as I saw it when I came here 92 years ago." (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed.) Dr. Barker died in 1940 at 100

years of age. Tragically, his marvelous arboretum, his labor of love, was destroyed, so the land could be used for farming.

Mammals

The fauna of these forests was unexcelled. Large bison or buffalo passed through the forest area on their way from one pasture to another. The heavy animals pounded out trails which extended in all directions even to the "Coon" (Raccoon River at Des Moines), trails the Indians found convenient for their use, too.

The Indians had a legend about the buffalo. They said that as these huge animals walked the narrow passage between the red sandstone rocks and the river (the old meander), they wounded and scratched themselves and that their red blood was absorbed by the rocks, making them red, and that later the red man sprang from these rocks.

Smaller animals such as elk, deer, beaver, raccoon, wolves, bobcats, foxes, squirrels, skunks, groundhogs, and rabbits chased through the timber. Some of the animals, the timber wolf, for example, and the fox, the predators of domestic animals and fowl, were not to be so welcome in the years to come, but what a splendid and interesting spectacle these denizens of the forest made. The *Knoxville Journal* (Jub. Ed, 1930, Sec. 9, p. 5) reported that wild hogs were plentiful and were a special menace to dogs and could easily tear them apart, and that more than one person had to climb a tree in a hurry to save himself from these wild beasts.

Birds

Land and aquatic birds provided a constant show and often a concert, too. Most common were the wild turkeys, eagles, hawks, and prairie chickens (the latter are no longer existent in the area). It was said that it was possible to open a window and shoot a wild turkey or prairie chicken without leaving the house. The prairie chickens were so numerous that they darkened the sky in their evening flight. (Arthur Nichols interview)

It will be surprising to most of us to learn that the most common species of bird to be seen was a bird now extinct, the passenger pigeon. It was said that the passenger pigeon was as plentiful as the sands of the river. Their disappearance is a mystery. Even scientists in the ornithological world are at a loss to account for their extinction.

The passenger pigeons moved in such prodigious numbers that they often darkened the sky in their flight, when they came in at sunset to roost in the timber. Their fluttering wings could be heard for several miles. This coupled with their sharp, high-keyed note, constantly sounded, made a night scene of wild confusion. Sometimes, the limbs of the trees would be broken by the weight of the enormous numbers of birds. At times, they were gathered in sacks as they were swept off the lower branches by boys with long poles. The birds were edible and considered a gourmet dish. The last ones were seen in 1868. Another phenomenon never to be seen again. (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sec 4, p. 3)

Geological Treasure

Most unique about Red Rock's setting were the red sandstone bluffs which "boxed" in the town on the north side. They were the inspiration for the name of the town, as well as the township, the lake, and the Red Rock Line, which will be described in the next chapter.

Samuel Calvin, the State Geologist in 1900, wrote of these sandstone deposits in *Iowa Geological Survey*, Vol. XI, p. 153, published in 1901:

"The red sandstone rocks are in many respects the most interesting deposit in the county.

The sandstone outcrops along the Des Moines River a short distance below and above the town of Red Rock. Its greatest thickness is slightly over 100 feet. It is interesting because of its great thickness and the small areas over which it is found. On either side, on the east and west, it ends abruptly, and no further traces are found of it in either direction.

Originally, it was a place of great deposition of sand which had a greater lateral extent than at present, but streams during the period of ancient seas eroded it on either side and this left this small isolated mass. The color is due to the presence of iron oxide."

The geologists wrote about the origin, the size, and the uniqueness of the red rock bluffs. Nature lovers stood in awe and marveled at their beauty, their strange formations, and unusual colors—the red bluffs with deep green trees on their summits. A colorful array of wildflowers added to its glory, and gave the bluffs a dreamy, storybook appearance. The following nostalgic poem was written by Josephine Templeton Huygens, of Portland, Oregon, in the 1930s, some years after she left the Red Rock region where she had spent her childhood.

THE RED ROCK BLUFFS

by Josephine Templeton Huygens

"Far down in the hills of Marion,
Where the river Des Moines flows by,
There stand the bluffs—the tall red bluffs
Reaching in grandeur up towards the sky.

Hewn out and marked by the hands of time
They stand by the river like guardsmen of old.
Silently watching throughout the years,
The story of Red Rock's life unfold.

In this garden spot of earth they stand
Crowned with the green treetops upon their brow,
God's emeralds bestowed by the Father of Life,
And only to Him shall the proud bluffs bow."

—Courtesy Sarah Jane Templeton Roetman

The Indians called this beautiful spot "Painted Rocks." When the white people came, they called it "Red Rock." It is the stage upon which this story is played.

In early 1994, Marion County Supervisor Will Prather discovered a map dated 1933 in the office of the DNR in Des Moines which contained plans for a Red Rock State Park. Accompanying the map was this printed information:

"RED ROCK STATE PARK—Marion County. Southeast of Des Moines lies one of the most picturesque as well as one of the most historic points along the entire length of the Des Moines River. On the northeast side of the river, red sandstone cliffs, unique in Iowa, rise above a wooded grove. At the top of the cliffs, woodlands and meadows offer lovely views and fine recreation areas. Here, treaties were signed between the Indians and the white men, and the boundary was set between their respective territories. The site is now used as a picnic ground. . . Opposite, across the river, fine wooded hills rise above the deep ravines with extraordinarily rich vegetation, and with sand blows, and sand dunes on top. Both areas, a total of 900 acres, would make an excellent state park, with the north side developed for recreation uses, and the south side as a nature preserve.

"Development: Swimming and wading pools, picnic grounds and playing fields, bridle paths, trails, camping grounds, an inn, cabins, shelter, zoo, and custodian's house."

Curiously, no one seems to know why the plans were not carried out.

Chapter 2

THE LAND PASSES FROM THE INDIANS
TO THE WHITES

Oh, Indian of the Iowa plain,
Who trod this land so long ago,
We never really saw your face,
We didn't know your name.

We didn't care to know you
The land was ours, that we knew,
A land for Christian godly folk,
We owned this earth and heaven, too.
—H.H.

Sac and Fox Indians

The last group of Indians to occupy the land which was soon to be occupied by the Whites were the Sac and Fox Indians. They had been preceded by the Ioways who left these lands some years before.

The Sac and Fox were a seminomadic, hunting and fishing people, who went on hunting expeditions about three months in the summer. In the wintertime they lived in the woods bordering the Whitebreast Creek, a nearby southern tributary of the Des Moines River. They frequently traversed the Red Rock area for meetings with other Indians or to hunt game. They knew the Red Rock area well. Their women planted and tended corn in small plots along the river.

Our knowledge of the Sac and Fox Indians is scarce and would be even more so if it were not for John Mikesell, who opened a trading post after the Sac and Fox had sold their lands to the Whites.

John Mikesell, of whom more will be said later, was an early arrival in the Red Rock area (1843). His observations are our best source of information concerning the Sacs and Foxes. Of course, the Indians had already changed a bit because of their contacts with the strange white men who came to occupy their land. Mikesell shared his experiences with the Indians with early settler, William Donnel, who included them in his valuable history entitled *Pioneers of Marion County*, published in 1872. It is the basis for the following information concerning the Indians.

Mikesell was a friend of the Indians who visited his trading post. He did not refer to them as savages as so many did. He treated them with kindness and learned some of their language, and they felt comfortable trading with him, as they believed that he treated them fairly. He had to be firm in several instances when they tried to make off with more than they paid for, but they were usually willing to acknowledge their error. They bought corn, potatoes, fat pork, and turnips, as well as whiskey. They paid with money they had received from the U. S. Government for the sale of their lands.

Mikesell was interested in the Indians as individuals and as families. He noted what he regarded as differences between his own race and theirs. He felt, for example, that the Indian men had little regard for their squaws. The men thought that hunting and war were their only responsibilities, and they treated the women as their slaves, requiring them not only to grow the corn, cook the meals, care for the children but to carry heavy loads as well.

Mikesell suggested to Chief Kisk-ke-kosh of the Sacs that the men should be more considerate of the squaws and help them with the heavy work. Mikesell said of the Chief, "Poor Kish. Had he been treated as kindly as he deserved to be, and if he had been encouraged by the Whites, his great honest heart might have made him an example and leader of reforms that would have resulted in the civilization and happiness of his race." (Donnel, 1872, 205).

Of the children, Mikesell noted, "The Indian children of both sexes were permitted to go totally naked, except for moccasins and leggings to protect themselves from snakes, till they were old enough for the sake of decency to demand some kind of covering." (Donnel, 1872, 188).

The Indians loved their children. They supplied each boy with a bow and arrow, as soon as he was old enough to be taught how to use them. This constituted the principal part of the boys' education. The fathers were patient teachers, and the boys were apt scholars. At a young age, their marksmanship was a wonder to those unskilled in this art. Mikesell observed those naked young ones, bow and arrow in hand, wading the river searching for fish and turtles. On discovering the game, they were almost sure to put an arrow into it, despite the difficulty of hitting a mark under water. The boys were thus being trained to help provide food for the family. From their mothers, the Indian girls learned the arts of cooking the game and caring for children.

In addition to wild game, the Indians ate corn and vegetables, and according to Mikesell, their food was not prepared in an appetizing way.

They were not fastidious as to cleanliness. These people though accustomed to poor fare were not averse, however, to the foods the Americans were eating. On occasion, Mikesell invited Indian friends to dinner, and he noted their gluttonous appetites.

Their principal vice was theft. Perhaps it was related to their concept of sharing. When one was in need, he could depend on his neighbors to help. Or, the Indians may have seen in the whites an example for their own actions, for

unscrupulous Whites who were drawn to the trading posts made a business of stealing ponies from the Indians and selling them elsewhere.

Whiskey was the Indians' worst enemy and led to drunken brawls. At times, even the squaws lay in a drunken stupor, sprawled out over the ground while their children were crying to be fed and cared for. Sac Chief Keokuk himself died in Kansas several years after their departure from Iowa, an inebriate, depressed over the loss of their old homes, though he was the one who had urged his people to sell their lands to the Whites.

Mikesell knew Chief Keokuk and at one time gave him a quart of whiskey. To Mikesell's amazement, Keokuk offered a prayer and then poured most of it into the fire as an offering to the Great Spirit. Unfortunately, the Indians regarded whiskey as one of their greatest blessings. They considered it a pathway of prayer to Manitou, the Great Spirit.

They believed that the Earth was sacred and not to be desecrated in any way. Their concepts of the land as belonging to all the people in the tribe instead of being owned by individuals was in direct contrast to that of the Whites who were shortly to occupy the land and use it to make the greatest possible profit from it, regardless of what damage they might do to the land. According to Indian insights, Manitou, the Great Spirit allowed all men to enjoy and be nourished by the fruits of the land.

The Indian concept of loyalty to the tribe and justice is told by Dawn Martin, Pleasantville:

"My dad lived in the very early days in Red Rock. He told many tales. One of them was:

One day a young Indian stole a horse from his tribe and rode away. Of course, the tribe missed the boy and the horse and rode off to find them. The boy was found guilty. He was told to lie down on the ground and put his head on a log. The Indian Chief took a stone sharpened axe and chopped off his head. Then they threw him into the mighty Des Moines!"

Various of the Indians performed kind deeds for the Whites, acquainting them with trails to travel, even accompanying those who had lost their way. The Whites usually failed to reciprocate. Some of the Whites, especially the women, froze in terror at seeing an Indian, but there is no evidence that their fears were justified. Perhaps the worst the Indian would do was to steal some item which attracted his attention, such as clothing hanging on the line.

The Indians, on the other hand, were chagrined and humiliated at the women's terror. The inability to communicate was doubtless one of the factors that led to misunderstandings. It is difficult to predict what course Indian-White relations might have taken had there been a more prolonged contact and had they come to understand each other's languages.

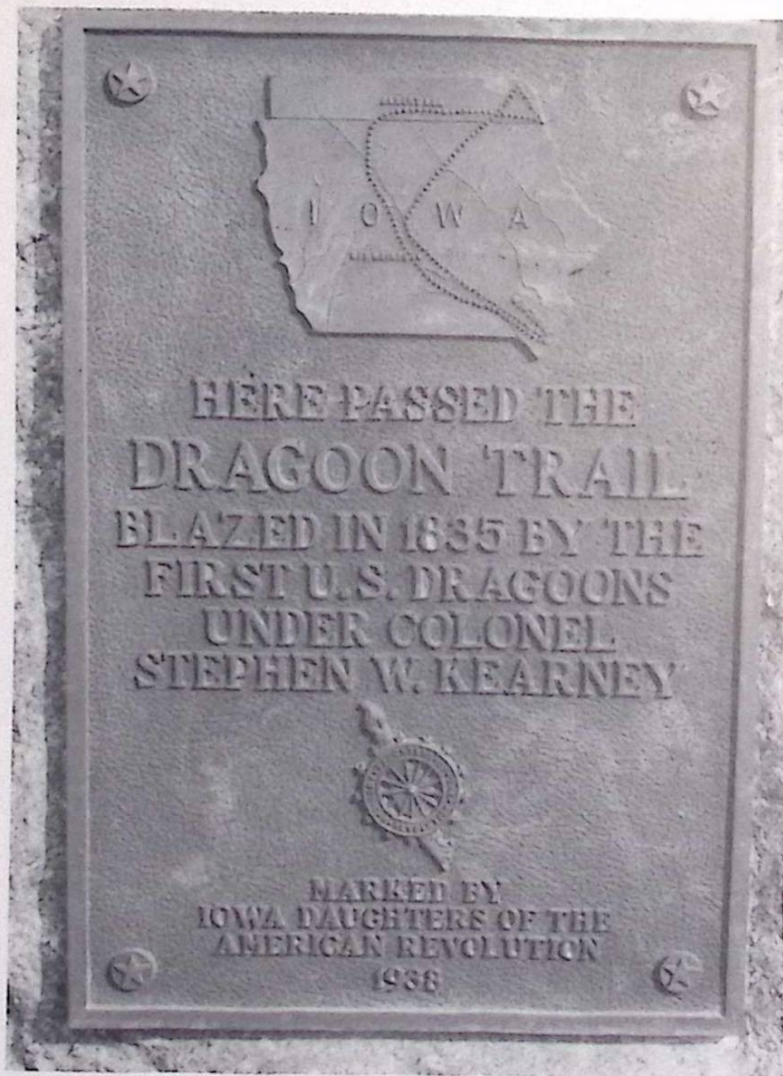
Steps in the Whites' Acquisition of the Indian Land

In the minds of U. S. treaty makers and prospective settlers, there was never a thought of racial accommodation and living together on the vast expanses of land in Iowa. Immigrants from Europe were welcomed with open arms, but the Indians who had lived here for generations and loved this beautiful land were never considered as possible neighbors.

The U. S. had purchased the vast interior of the country from France (the Louisiana Purchase) in 1803. Actually, of course, France had no more right to it than did any other European country. It belonged to the Indians; it was their Paradise.

Land-hungry Eastern farmers and money-hungry land speculators were pressing the Government to make these lands available to them. The Government itself had dreams of extending U. S. territory from "sea to shining sea." But the Indians were there. At least, the U. S. had the grace to make friendly overtures, urging the Indians to sell their rights to the lands. If these had not been successful, however, the U. S. would likely have used arms to remove them.

The Dragoons Scout the Land



George Gitter

Dagoon Trail Historical Marker located about one mile south of the mile-long bridge on Highway 14.

In order to learn the resources of the new land and the numbers and circumstances of the people who lived here, the U. S. Government in 1835 sent out a force of 150 cavalymen, which they called the Dragoons, to march up from Keokuk along the Des Moines River all the way into Minnesota to explore and map this territory. The unit was under the command of Col. Stephen A. Kearney, with Nathan Boone, son of Daniel Boone, second in command. It must have been an amazing sight for the Indians camping along the river when they beheld those strange uniformed white-faced men on horseback passing through their land.

The Dragoons were charged with locating good sites for forts to protect the area as well as the Whites who would later settle the area.

(In 1993, the U. S. Corps of Engineers set out a number of road signs to mark the scenic trail designated by the Des Moines River Greenbelt Committee. They named it the Dagoon Trail. The historical marker a mile or two south of the Mile Long Bridge on State Highway #14 explains the functions of the Dragoons and locates the Dagoon Trail on a map of Iowa).

The New Purchase of 1842

In 1842, Sac and Fox Indians from all over central Iowa were called together by U. S. Government to meet at Agency, six miles east of Ottumwa, Iowa, to discuss selling their lands. It was a gala affair as the prairie became the stage for a colorful and dramatic and certainly a significant episode in our history. Hundreds of wickiups dotted the countryside and around them swarmed the Indians in all their finery, dressed in every color and description.

The U.S. Government agents asked the Indians to sell them a large section of Iowa, roughly the central one-third (see map on front cover). Chief Keokuk enraptured his listeners by his oration describing the beauties of the tribal lands and waters they were transferring to the Whites. Keokuk was willing to sell because his people would receive so much money, \$800,000, for their 12 million acres in Iowa (less than 7 cents an acre), an amount which seemingly would last forever. The treaty signed between the Whites and the Indians was known as the New Purchase of 1842. Sadly, most of the Indians did not realize that they were giving up their lands forever.

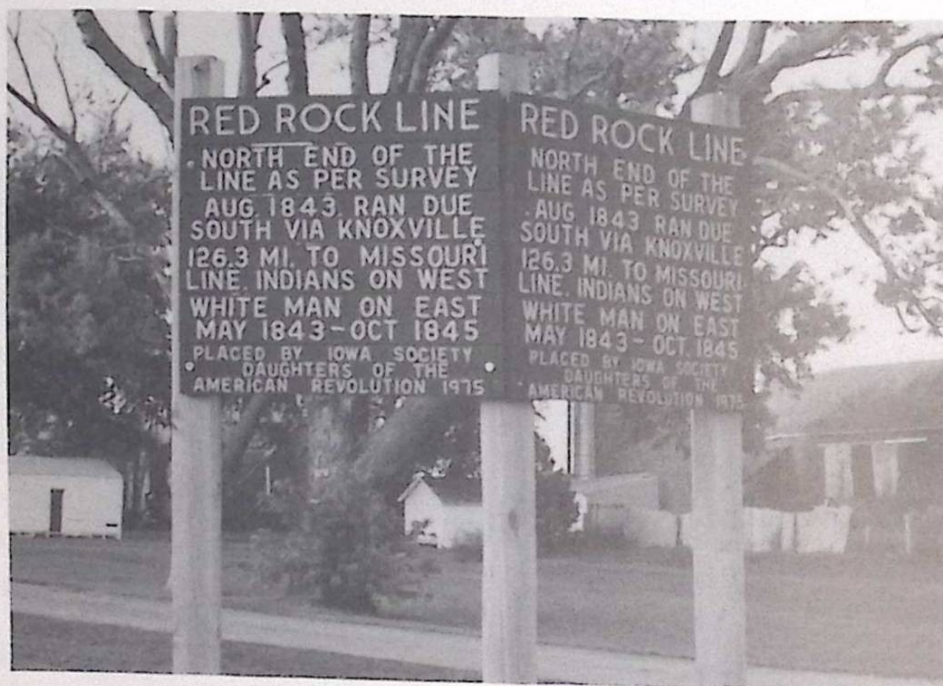
(This historic transfer of land is chronicled in the outdoor Chief Wapello Park and Museum near Agency, Iowa. The Burlington Railroad established this park right along the rails. When they still carried passengers, the train stopped there so all could see the graves of Chief Wapello and close to it, the grave of Joheph M. Street, the Indian agent the Indians loved so much. The passengers could also read the colorful posters which describe the event. The park is well worth a visit).

The Red Rock Line and its Impact on the Town of Red Rock

Because it would be impossible to get the Indians out of the land at once, it was decided to do it in two stages. The Government designated a line from

the Iowa-Missouri border through the "Painted Rocks," to the north end of the land purchased. It was designated as the Red Rock Line. The Indians were to evacuate the lands east of the line by May 1, 1843, and White settlers could occupy that territory; the Indians were to evacuate the lands west of the line by October 11, 1845, and Whites could then enter that area. (See map on front cover).

The Red Rock Line thus was in force as a dividing line for only two and a half years—May 1, 1843, to October 11, 1845—but it proved to be most significant in the history of Iowa, especially for the future village of Red Rock, which was laid out just east of the Line. The place where the Red Rock Line crossed the Des Moines River was the most strategic location in Central Iowa.



Harriet Heusinkveld

North end of the Red Rock Line, Hardin County.

(A stone monument marking the Red Rock Line has been placed by the D.A.R. on the southeast corner of the Knoxville courthouse grounds and another monument at the north end of the Red Rock Line near Steamboat Rock in Hardin County).

It became the duty of the U. S. Dragoons headquartered at Fort Des Moines to keep the Indians out of the area east of the Red Rock Line after May, 1843, and the Whites out of the area west of the Line. Then in October, 1845, they escorted the Indians out of Iowa.

From 1843-45, white traders operated trading posts on the Red Rock Line so they could buy furs and skins from the Indians in exchange for food items such as potatoes and corn, blankets, guns and gunpowder, and whiskey. Traders were required to obtain a license for their business. Those who complied could sell to the Indians on credit, and on payday present their claims to the Indian Agent and get their money. Those who did not comply could not expect any help in collecting their accounts.

Three of the traders who were to become long time residents of Red Rock were J. R. Bedell, founder of the town, and John H. Mikesell, already mentioned, and James W. Harp. Other trading posts were operated by Gaddis and Nye, and another by Sam Turner, all temporary residents.

Effects of the Red Rock Line on the Town

It was the trading posts which gave Red Rock its initial advantage over all other locations in the area, and Red Rock dominated in the trade with Whites as well as with Indians. Because of the trading posts, Red Rock became the first and largest settlement in Marion County.

Red Rock's location at the edge of white civilization brought problems, too. The frontier location of the trading posts drew adventurers of all kinds, some interested only in making a fortune from the Indian fur trade. What was even worse, a significant number were people fleeing from the law. They came from places eastward where they had committed crimes. Red Rock was as far westward as they could go.

Horse Thieves

Some exploited the situation and became horse thieves. Horses were so important where there was no other form of transportation, and so hard to come by, that stealing horses was tempting. With horses, men could make a quick getaway if necessary, or more likely they could obtain a lucrative income based on selling the horses to newcomers. They stole horses from the Whites; they stole them from the Indians.

One of the horse thieves was captured by citizen Ray Alfrey. The offender was riding away when he was seized, taken to the budding village of Red Rock, severely whipped, and driven out of the area.

Another instance of horse stealing was that of a fellow named Sutton who was captured, tried, whipped, and driven out of the country. Sutton, however, had the audacity to return in less than a week and was caught in the act of stealing another horse, this from one of the men who had helped in the whipping the week before. Sutton was hanged to a tree but not long enough for him to strangle. He was let down and ordered to leave, this time for good. He surely must have been desperate for a horse for even this drastic punishment did not cure him, and he stole another horse that same evening and was attempting to make his getaway when he was shot and killed instantly.

The criminals were hard to catch due to the scarcity of settlements and hard to punish because of the scarcity of judges. Therefore, citizens often took the law into their own hands. It was said that thieves were turned over to "Judge Lynch."

The most notorious criminal ever to spend time in the area was Henry Lott, who in 1846 lived in Red Rock village with his family. He got into a fight with brothers Matt and John Williams, also rough characters, who resolved to take revenge. Being well bolstered with whiskey, the brothers made a raid on Red

Rock and vicinity in search of their victim. They kicked down every door in the village until they found Lott and dragged him out of bed and gave him a beating.

Under the circumstances Lott thought it best to leave Red Rock for Fort Des Moines, where he was as yet unknown. There he continued to make history. He was suspected and sought for stealing horses, but he slipped through the hands of the soldiers at the Fort and escaped north to the Boone River area.

The Sioux Indians, who lived along the Boone, soon suspected Lott of stealing their horses, and one cold December day, they appeared at his home in order to repossess them. Lott's wife became so frightened at seeing the Indians that she ran out and hid in the woods until such time as the Indians went away. She became thoroughly chilled and subsequently died of pneumonia. Milton, the Lott's twelve-year old son, ran from the house and started following the Des Moines River to find his way back to his old home at Red Rock, only to freeze to death.

Henry Lott sought revenge on the Sioux Indian chief for the deaths of his wife and son. He found the chief in Humboldt County and killed him along with some of his family. After that, Lott knew it would not be wise to stay around, so he fled to California and was never seen or heard of again. The Sioux pushed northward and perpetrated the Spirit Lake Massacre, believed to be in retaliation for Lott's murder of their chief.

Thus the two years the Red Rock Line was in force was a rough time for the Red Rock area. Fights between Indians and Whites, drunken brawls among both Indians and Whites, the presence of desperadoes who had supposedly committed crimes elsewhere, thefts, and murders gave it an unsavory reputation. It became known as the "homicide capital of Iowa."

Added to the confusion was the fact that white settlers who had learned of the land which would soon be available west of the Red Rock Line began to come into the area east of the line. They waited so as to be able to be the first to claim and obtain the land. The ferry was practically choked with waiting lines of would-be settlers. Doubtless, there was some scuffling among them for places in the line.

Departure of the Indians

Finally the Whites' long-awaited day arrived! The Indians were to leave Iowa. Dr. W. H. H. Barker, early pioneer from nearby Harvey, described the departure of the Indians from Red Rock in 1845, as well as his appraisal of the Indians, as follows:

"The Red Man's farewell occurred in October, 1845. At that time, the entire body of Indians was assembled at Red Rock preparatory to vacating their ancient domains. This was done in a dual manner. The braves rode their war steeds across to a point known as Council Bluffs. All the rest—aged warriors, squaws,

papooses—took passage in canoes, some 300 or more in number, and going down the Des Moines River to its mouth, they were transferred to the same point (Council Bluffs).

“It was a pathetic sight, but colorful. The Indians gave their war whoops, chanted their war songs, ran boat races, and splashed in the water like aquatic birds.

“No proper tribute can ever be paid that vanished people. They were ever the friends of the Whites and yielded to them without parley and for a mere pittance all their holdings. Never did they show revenge or shed a drop of innocent blood.” (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept. 25, 1930, Sec 4, p. 5)

Most of the Whites doubtless thought little of the Indian departure except their own joy that it would now be possible for them to occupy the land. Perhaps, some felt a bit of compunction about displacing them. Many years later, when the town of Red Rock was about to be evacuated to make way for Lake Red Rock, one old timer present at the final get-together at the Church said, “Now, I know how the Indians felt when they had to leave the land.” (from a March, 1992, letter from Marilyn Korth, Dows, Iowa, concerning her mother, Leo Taylor Etherington, formerly of Red Rock).

For the Whites, it was a new and glorious day that was dawning. For the Indians, it was “Paradise Lost.”

Chapter 3

WHITE SETTLEMENT AND SETTLERS

Claiming and Taming the Land

The mad rush to own land was on! Already in 1843, settlers had moved in and established claims to much of the land east of the Red Rock Line. All they had to do was to stop at an unoccupied place, select the land they wanted, step off the number of steps each way that would constitute 320 acres, and blaze lines (gash the bark with axes) on the trees which marked their boundaries. These lines would be far from correct inasmuch as the land had not yet been surveyed, but it was understood that adjustments would be made later.

After the Indian removal from Iowa in October, 1845, the real tide of settlers pushed into the area west of the Red Rock Line. Would-be settlers were already waiting in their wagons or on horseback the night before the opening waiting for the Dragoons to shoot a gun at midnight to announce that the area west of the Line was now open to settlement.

By the next morning, all the lands in the west part of the county were claimed. It must have been an exciting night as the men scrambled around with their lanterns to find a good site on which to settle and then to blaze the tree around their claim to announce that this land was taken. Their future fortunes were likely to depend on the nature of the land they chose.

To guarantee his claim, the settler had to build a house on the land, meanwhile camping on the ground or in wagons, because if he left the land, someone else might claim it (and often did). The new home was necessarily very primitive, made of round logs, floored with split logs, and roofed with bark. A fireplace and chimney for heat and for cooking was made of sod plastered with clay, or sticks and clay and required real ingenuity. For furniture, settlers made rude benches and tables from various lengths of logs.

Said old timer George Steunenberg, "New settlers kept coming. It was the period of the great migration westward. Long trains of covered wagons came rolling across Iowa on the way to the boundless West where land was to be had for the taking. We kids used to stand out under the elm tree in front of our house and watch the passing show. But there was little enthusiasm in it.

Tired horses straining at the traces, tired women shooing flies from crying babies, tired cows led by ropes behind the wagons, men on horseback with dust in their beards, no face showing a touch of enthusiasm. In grim silence broken only by the rumble of the wheels and the creak of leather, they sailed by and vanished in the direction of the setting sun—the land of romance, of the blanket Indian, and the buffalo.” (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept. 25, 1930, Sec. 3, p. 1)

There were the unfortunate ones who didn’t live to reach their goal. The story is related about a woman traveler who had died near Red Rock, presumably killed, for her wealth. Her grave was discovered fifty or more years later as gravediggers were working on another grave. They found a skeleton of a white woman wearing a gold necklace with emeralds. Evidently, her killer had left the necklace in fear of being found with it in his possession, but he probably made off with other valuables, which were unidentifiable. (Laird, 1990, 93)

Some of the land seekers stopped in the Red Rock area, a number of them crossing the river to settle on the south side in Union Township—names such as Blaine, Teter, Leuty, Ruckman, Jones—solid citizens who through the years were associated with the land south of the river. The Bedells, the Mikesells, the Mathews, and others chose lands north of the river.

The town of Red Rock came to be the trading center for those on both sides of the river. The Red Rock traders brought in goods from Keokuk by packet boat or by wagon. Red Rock was the place to buy what one needed.

It was said that soon those on each side developed their own particular ethos and their loyalties and their differences in thinking from those of the other side of the river. Those who chose the south side became the big landowners in the early years, rich by virtue of the size of their landholdings and the less hilly terrain than existed north of the river. According to those who lived on the north side, “To become rich was the aim of those who lived south of the river.”

After establishing themselves on the land, the settlers had to prepare land for planting. The first settlers located at the edge of the timber, where the land was easy to prepare for crops in contrast to breaking the prairie. The first season, they broke ten or twelve acres, which in later years would be considered no more than a garden. The first year’s crop usually consisted of corn, potatoes, turnips, and beans. Fortunately the diet could be supplemented with the abundant wild game, wild fruits, and nuts from the forests. Another tasty addition was maple syrup and maple sugar, the sap extracted from the black maple tree. The maple products spread on the bread made a wonderful addition to a meal. Cane sugar was high priced and was heavy to transport which added to the cost.

Early settler George J. Jones also described the crop planting procedure, “The pioneers were not of the modern type. They were fearless and very determined for the future, and nothing seemed to be too hard for them. In those

early days, there was not a single plowing machine in Marion County, or a reaper to cut the heavy grain that these rich prairies produced. All was cut with a cradle and bound by hand. The hay was cut with a scythe and raked with a wooden rake.’

Jones went on to say, “They broke the prairie sod with four and five yoke of oxen hitched to a plow, making 24-inch furrows, and planted corn on top of this by taking an axe and striking it into the center of a chunk of sod, dropping the corn into the slot thus formed, and then stepping on it to cover it. That was all that was ever done to it until the time to harvest it, and they raised good corn. (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept. 25, 1930, Sec. 11, p. 4)

Each generation to follow this first generation would look back to the past generation and find those methods of farming primitive, as compared with their own current “modern” ones. They would feel that their own methods were so advanced that they could never be surpassed.

Corn was the staple item in the diet, and an almost overwhelming problem was getting it ground into meal for cornbread. Farmers had to travel many miles in their wagons to get to a mill somewhere. At first they had to go to Keosauqua or Bonaparte in eastern Iowa, a trip which took several weeks. An alternative was to pour hot water over the corn to soften it and then pound it with a pestle until it was suitable for making hominy. A few lucky ones had brought a coffee mill, which however produced an inferior substitute to that ground in a grist mill.

It was a great relief when grist mills were established closer to Red Rock. When Red Rock built its own grist mill in 1854, people from all around the area patronized that mill, a boon for business in Red Rock.

From the diary of William Leuty, we learn something of the forced self-sufficiency of those early pioneers, “Mother used to shear the sheep, card the wool, spin and weave it into cloth, and make our clothes and blankets. She mixed black sheep wool and white to make a gray wool. She added indigo to the yarn to make a lovely blue. Walnut and butternut hulls were used to color the wool brown, and she used a chemical called madder. I did not have a store-bought suit of clothes until I was 18 years old.

“For lighting lamps, she put goose grease in a dish with a rag for a wick. We also used to read by the light of the fireplace.” (Walker, 1938, 125)

Other examples of the necessity for almost complete self-sufficiency can be noted in the biographies of some of the more prominent of the early settlers, which follow:

Prominent Early Settlers

From the many capable people who settled in the Red Rock area, I have selected four individuals or families who contributed immensely to the development of Red Rock. Two of the families and their offspring continued to live in the town until finally it had to be abandoned—the Mikesells and the

Ruckmans. Two of the families subsequently moved elsewhere, but the results of their efforts in Red Rock continued to enrich the town—John D. Bedell and the Mathews family.

John D. Bedell, Founder of Red Rock

The history of the town of Red Rock began with the coming of J. D. Bedell, one of the first white men to settle in Marion County. He was born in Kentucky in 1817, and in 1830 at the of age 13, he left with his parents to live in Montgomery County, Missouri, on the Des Moines River. In 1842, he made a land claim in Farmington in Van Buren County, Iowa. In 1843, at the age of 26 and still restless, he joined with Lewis LePlant, a Frenchman who could speak the Indian language. The two set out on foot in quest of a location in the New Purchase territory, with the purpose of establishing a settlement.

When on March 20, 1843, the two men got to this beautiful well-wooded spot on the north side of the Des Moines River, walled in by hills, they felt very strongly it would be a desirable location for a trading post and a town. They were right. At that time, there could be no more strategic spot in central Iowa than on the Red Rock Line where it crossed the Des Moines River. A party of Indians passing through welcomed them into their warm shelter that first night.

Bedell blazed a tree on the banks of the river to establish a claim to a piece of land, though it was as yet illegal according to the terms of the New Purchase to enter this area until May 1, 1843. To prevent that from happening, the U. S. Dragoons were out on patrol. Bedell, however, managed to escape their vigilance. He was one of the many who made a hasty, clandestine visit into this area which still belonged to the Indians. In the matter of a month, Indian claims to the east of the Red Rock Line would be extinguished. Bedell wanted to get first chance on a site he liked.

With the help of LePlant, Bedell built a light pole cabin. Two weeks later Bedell went to Keokuk and purchased a keel boat and loaded it with about 10 tons of merchandise to stock a frontier trading house. Bedell had the town platted in 1845, but it was 1847 before Bedell as part of a firm called Bedell, Droulliard, and Harp laid out the town.

For two years, Bedell operated his trading post, trading with the Indians. Farming was not his main concern, but he did cultivate ten acres of corn. After the Indians left the area, he continued in the grocery business, at first as a bachelor. In 1848, he married Rachel Collins who was born in Warren County, Ohio, and they had five children. In 1855, he gave up the grocery business and bought a steam saw mill on Mikesell Creek. He and his family moved to a 300 acre farm in 1876, where according an early historian, he suffered many of the hardships of pioneer life. (Donnel, 1872, 161)

Bedell was permanently identified with the growth of the town and was known by reputation to almost every person in it. As Justice of the Peace, he held trials, thus settling disputes, and he performed marriages. He petitioned

the Legislature for roads connecting the town with the road extending from Oskaloosa to Des Moines (the present State Hwy. #163) and also for a road to connect with a road from Jefferson County to Whitebreast Creek.

“He was a man of strict integrity, his word being as good as a bond. He was kind and warm-hearted as a friend, and his character as a businessman may be inferred from the success which attended his career.” (Donnel, 1872, 16)

Bedell was still living in Red Rock in 1881 when he was 64 years old, but after that I can find no record of what happened to the Bedell family. Apparently, they moved away from Red Rock because there is no recorded Bedell burial in Marion County except that of a one-month-old daughter, Amy H., who died in March, 1858, and was buried in the Red Rock Cemetery.

To everyone's surprise, a grandson of the Bedell's turned up in Red Rock in 1949. *Cordova News*, May 19, 1949, reports the visit thus: “A descendant of J. D. Bedell, the first settler of Red Rock, was here last week looking up his family history. He was in the store, called on Griffith Mikesell, and at the Joe Templeton home. The Templeton farm is the original Bedell homestead, where the sawmill was located. Mary Templeton had a pitcher purchased at one time from the Bedell Store. (The pitcher is now a proud possession of Mrs. Dorothy Templeton of rural Knoxville). A note inside says, “Staffordshire pitcher—1855.”

“This grandson took a picture of the heirloom and enjoyed visiting with the Templetons about our early pioneer history. He was a dinner guest in their home. His son accompanied him, and their home is in Chicago.”

John Huff Mikesell, Indian Trader and Indian Chronicler

In 1843, a month after Bedell's arrival in Red Rock, the renowned colorful adventurer, John Huff Mikesell, 41 years of age, started out from his home in Indiana with two teen-aged sons. Their destination was somewhere in the West, but they did not exactly know where. People thought they were crazy to leave a good place for one unknown. But John Mikesell was ever ready for a new challenge. The journey was made without incident except for the difficulty in obtaining supplies of food.

Upon their arrival in Iowa, they made a decision to stop in Marion County. John and his sons selected a claim on what came to be known as Mikesell's Creek (later named Brush Creek) about a mile northeast (Sec. 25) of Red Rock village.

The claim established, John went back to Indiana and brought back his wife, Phebe H. Burch Mikesell, and their other children. They built a log cabin and a stone cellar with the rocks they picked up in the area. He and his sons proceeded to prepare a plot of ground for raising a crop.

The following winter was one of the hardest winters the area has ever experienced. The family lived mostly on hog and hominy. On his way to Red Rock,

at Agency, Iowa, he had bought a milk cow, which came in fresh early in the winter, and the cow with her young calf shared the little cabin during the cold winter nights. John and his sons enjoyed hunting, and fresh wild game became a substantial part of their diet. Mikesell and his oldest son William Jackson Mikesell occasionally joined the Indians on a hunt.

In the spring, Mikesell took to raising vegetables, realizing good profits from the sale of these commodities to both Whites and Indians. During the next winter, however, he sold \$600 worth of those products to the Indians on the promise that they would pay by the next spring. Despite his many attempts to collect, Mikesell received only \$7 on that account.

When the Indians left the area in 1845, Mikesell and his sons took to full-time farming, and they improved their claim. Those descendants who continued to live in Marion County followed in his footsteps as farmers, always on the same land he had originally claimed. They were among those forced to move when Lake Red Rock was formed 125 years later.

His wife Phebe died in 1869 when John Mikesell was 67 years old. A short time later he fell in love with and proposed marriage to a young widow, Mrs. Mahala (Griffith) Barcus. His grown children objected seriously, but he was determined to marry her. The upshot was that the children asked the court to declare him mentally incompetent and to act as his guardian. However, no such action was taken. Love prevailed and by October of that year the marriage took place, and the new couple moved from the farm into a house in Red Rock village. Here in his 70s, he fathered a second family. Anne Elizabeth, who married James Moomaw and moved to Des Moines, and (Columbus) Griffith, who lived in Red Rock until his death in 1960. Together, Mikesell and son Griffith had spanned almost the entire period of the history of Red Rock.

John Mikesell died in 1882 at the age of 80. His will showed that he had not forgotten the efforts of those children who had opposed his second marriage. He left them each only \$1. Evidently Mikesell was illiterate because his will was signed "X—his mark, John Mikesell."

Of Mikesell's twelve children, eight of the ten from his first marriage survived, of whom Martha, wife of Cyrus Alley and grandmother of Blanche Karr (Mrs. James Templeton) and her descendants continued to live in Red Rock, and from his second marriage his son Griffith and his three sons, Hough, Bill, and Ray also continued to live in Red Rock.

William Jackson Mikesell achieved fame in the West, first as a participant in the Gold Rush to California and later as a landowner in Kansas. His story will be told in a later section.

Two of John Mikesell's young sons, Thomas J. and Byron B., were buried in the Mikesell orchard, but the whereabouts of their tombstones is now unknown. A young Indian boy who had been severely scalded and died in the Indians' encampment near the Mikesell farm was also buried there. Mikesell had convinced the parents that it was a better way of burial than tying the



Larry Mikesell

John Huff Mikesell, 67, and second wife, Mahala Griffith Barcus, 39, in 1870.

corpse up in the top of a tree as was the Indian custom. Mikesell's warm feelings for the Indians was thus further demonstrated.

To this day, old timers refer to the Indian buried on the Mikesell property though they cannot locate the grave.

John Mikesell eventually provided for family burials on an acre of land in Section 30, Summit Township. The cemetery is known as the Mikesell Cemetery, or more frequently as the Yowell Cemetery, as members of both families are buried there. The cemetery is now abandoned although a wooden fence encloses it to keep cattle out. Some of the stones are of the red sandstone which proved to be poor tombstone material. John Huff Mikesell (1882), his first wife Phebe (1869), his brother William F. Mikesell (1891) and William's wife Lucretia (1882) are among those buried there. The last tombstone is dated 1898.

Mikesell is indeed a name to be remembered in connection with the history of Red Rock.

The Ruckmans, Scholar-Farmers

Amos and Amanda Ruckman

The first of the illustrious Ruckman family to come to Red Rock were Amos Ruckman (b. 1806), his wife, nee Amanda F. Houck (b. 1812), and their three teenage sons, 15-year old Eliphalet Benton, 14-year old John Lewis, and 13-year old Joseph. On October 14, 1852, they left their home in Kentucky with two yokes of oxen and two horses bound for the free states, because they were opposed to the Southern institution of slavery, believing that human beings should not be held in bondage. Sixty days later, after a perilous crossing of the Ohio River, severe snowstorms, and freezing cold, they forded the Whitebreast Creek and they were at the end of their journey. For about three months, they lived with a friend in Knoxville until a house could be built.

The Ruckmans entered land, (Sec. 11 in Union Township, P. O. Red Rock, about 2 miles south, across the river from the town), and erected a log home for themselves with a fireplace and chimney built from local stones. Little did they know that this cabin was to be a famous local landmark for almost 100 years into the future. Amos was a justice of the peace for two years, and active in the Baptist church and the Republican Party. The family worked hard and before he died in 1884, he and his son Eliphalet owned 845 acres of land.

William Clyde Ruckman, Amos and Amanda's grandson, described this couple in an article, "The Ruckman Cabin." Amos Ruckman was a devout man whose word was as good as his bond. He sat in the evenings before the fireplace, his Bible on his knees, a candle in his hand, and read to his wife and family. He believed in education and sent his sons to Central College (a Baptist College in Pella) almost as soon as it was organized."

It was unusual to give women any role in history at that time or credit them with playing an important part in shaping the community. Amanda must have been a superior person. Her grandson, Clyde Ruckman, continues, "Amanda, his wife, was interested in everything. I do not know how much formal education she had, but she was well informed in government, history, and events of her time." Another source said of Amanda, "Before her marriage in Kentucky, she was taught the art of weaving by a school teacher, and she became an expert weaver. She taught the women of the neighborhood the art and was famous as a housewife." (Wright, 1915, 168-69)

Again quoting grandson William Clyde Ruckman, "In this home everything the family used was produced, except a very few things such as coffee, which was purchased as green berries, salt, and sugar. Many herbs were grown in the garden and used for various ailments. Wool was carded and spun, then woven into cloth and blankets. Flax was prepared for weaving, usually with cotton. Knitting was done in every spare moment. Caps and powder and lead were purchased and the bullets were molded by the fireplace. I have seen it done many times."

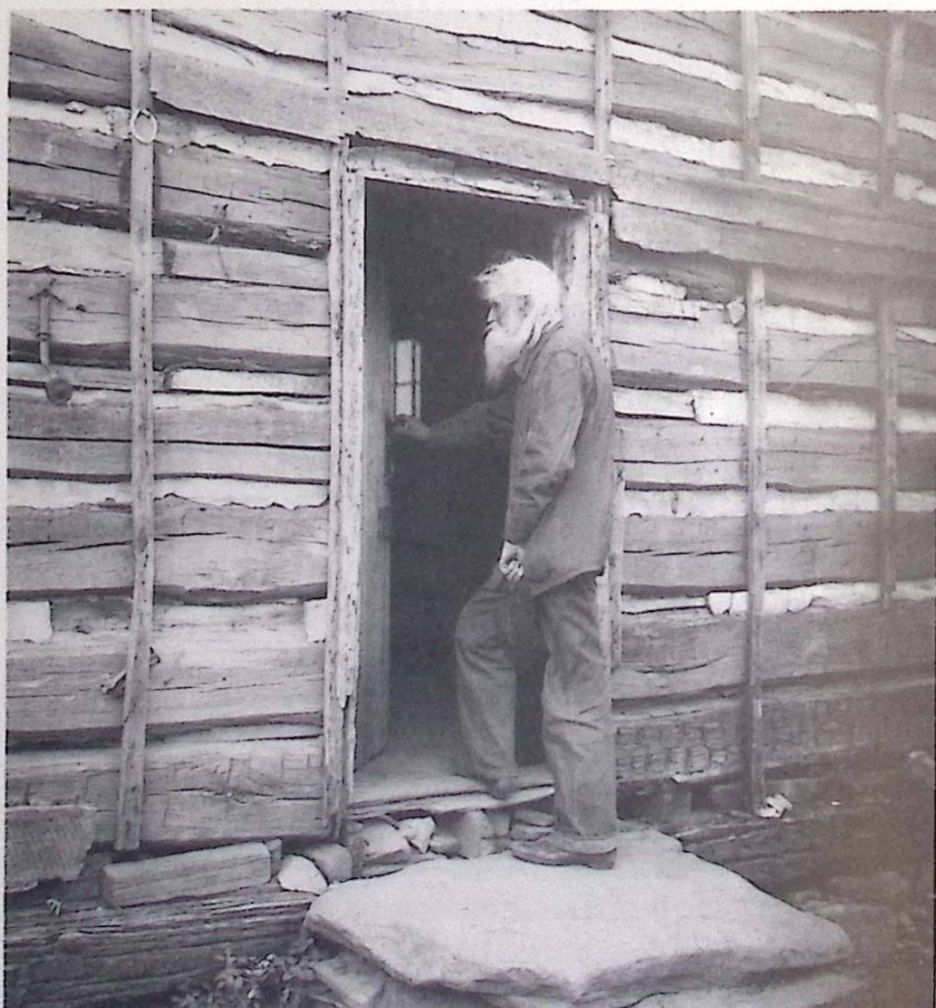
"The original log cabin, finished in March 20, 1853, had to be enlarged several times to accommodate the growing family. It stood for many years. Amos

(1884), and Amanda (1898), and their son Eliphalet (1917) and his wife Charity (1881) died in this cabin."

"Marriages were celebrated in this cabin also. Volumes could be written about the lives that have passed through this old cabin. Of love and laughter—of sorrow and disaster." (Ruckman, n.d., *The Cabin*)

The home was indeed a well-known landmark. Interestingly, Mrs. Karr records in her *Cordova News*, of May, 1960, "One of the big trees in the yard of Margaret Ruckman Streeter's home had to be sawed down and moved away. It was a massive one. This was at the old "Bent" Ruckman home where the pioneer log cabin stood for years. Four generations had stood in the shade of this tree."

Ruckman descendants lived in the cabin until 1929 when William and Margaret Ruckman Streeter (granddaughter of Eliphalet and Charity) purchased the land and built a large new house on the property. The cabin remained where the garage now stands until the year 1946, and the family sometimes took little groups on tours through the attractive cabin with its interesting antiques. However, bricks started falling from the chimney, and it was deemed unsafe to continue using the cabin any longer. It was torn down in 1946, 93 years after it was built. What a pity that it was not restored and entered in the National Register of Historic Places!



Bob Jones

Eliphalet Ruckman entering his log cabin. Note the door steps.

(The site where the historic cabin stood for so many years is just to the west of the Streeter house (the present garage site). The Streeter house, a large white square house on the south side of the road, is the first house west from Highway 14 on the Pleasantville Road (G-40).

Tragedy struck the Amos and Amanda Ruckman family when in 1863 their two younger sons, John and Joseph, who had joined the Union Army, were killed in the battle of Jackson (Mississippi), fighting for the very cause which had impelled the family to leave the South. This story is related in the chapter on the Civil War.

Eliphalet Benton and Charity Ruckman

Eliphalet (known as E. B. or Bent), son of Amos and Amanda Ruckman, attended a rural school near their home (Blaine School) taught by Captain Blaine. Then he himself became a teacher at age 20. He earned \$20 a month. In order to better himself, he enrolled in a science curriculum at Central College in Pella for a time. He did not finish however, as he had to return to work on his father's farm when his two younger brothers, John and Joseph, left to fight in the Civil War.

Eliphalet, Amos' and Amanda's only living son after the deaths of the two younger sons, inherited the land and became one of the most influential farmers and stock raisers in Marion County. He purchased the finest bred cattle from Kentucky.

On March, 17, 1859, he married a neighbor girl, Charity Walker. They had nine children—five sons and four daughters. According to his great-great grandson, Mark Allison Templeton, "E. B. was not physically ambitious. He liked to sit in front of the fireplace and 'warm his belly,' then turn his chair around to warm his chilled back." (Templeton, 1974, 4)

Eliphalet loved politics, and he served in a number of township and county offices, which was more to his liking than toiling on the farm. He was an unusually influential man in early Marion County and Red Rock affairs. He was an ardent Republican. He served as County Surveyor, County Auditor, and a member of the County Board of Supervisors for several terms. He served on the Central College Board of Trustees for 40 years. In the process, he spent so much time chatting while sitting with friends in front of his fireplace and serving on various boards that he had to maintain his finances by selling off portions of his land.

Tragedy struck this family, too. The *Knoxville Journal* of May 29, 1878, records:

"Hannah, little 12-year old daughter of E. B. Ruckman of Union Township, was instantly killed by lightning last Saturday evening. She and her sister were out in the pasture on the hill west of the house to drive in the cows. A dark cloud was passing over but not a drop of rain fell. There was just one clap of thunder heard,



Bob Jones

Eliphalet "Bent" Ruckman inside his cabin. c. 1910

preceded by a discharge of electricity from the cloud which proved to be fatal to the little girl. A dark line across the forehead and a slight burn on the neck were the only marks on her body. The dress she was wearing, however, was left with large burned out holes." *(The dress is now in the possession of Mrs. Hugh Templeton).*

Little Hannah was buried on their own farm, a mile north of their cabin, the first to be buried in what was to become the beautiful Ruckman Cemetery on the south bluffs of the Des Moines River (now Lake Red Rock).

Three years later, in 1881, Eliphalet's wife Charity died in childbirth, at age 42, and the newly born baby son also died. She had borne eight other children. Her plight was that of many young women of that time.

Doubtless causing E. B.'s family considerable anxiety for a time was their youngest son Zaccheus' participation in the Spanish American War in 1898. Unlike his uncles, John and Joe Ruckman, who died in the Civil War, he survived and lived in Red Rock until his death in 1947. He lived on a soldier's pension from the Government for the rest of his life.

Eliphalet Benton Ruckman died in 1917 at the age of 80 years. He had continuously made his home for the past 65 years (ever since he came to Iowa) in the same house—the log cabin, the same school district, the same township. He was buried beside his wife Charity in beautiful Ruckman Cemetery, where little Hannah was also buried.

Eliphalet Benton Ruckman had contributed greatly to Marion County government policies and administration, especially to the culture and emphasis on education and gracious living which continued through the lives of his children, most of whom settled in the area. Great-great grandson Mark Templeton ended his treatise on Eliphalet Ruckman by saying “He did not rush life, but took time to think and to visit. Perhaps we could all slow down a little and benefit from it.” (Templeton, 1974, 5)

Eliphalet's large family of sons and daughters became farmers and farmers' wives. They went to Central College in their youth and then returned to the Red Rock area where they became prosperous farmers. Among them were the various Jones and Templeton families, the Rineharts, Margaret Ruckman Streeter, Zaccheus Ruckman and their descendants.



Bob Jones
Bent Ruckman and his children in front of their log cabin home. c. 1910. Front row: Zaccheus, Mary Elizabeth (married Jones), Eliphalet, Robert Q., Martha (married Snow, then Carle). Back row: Joe, John, Jane (married Rinehart), Clyde.

Two Ruckmans who made significant lasting contributions to the cause of education were Margaret Ruckman Streeter (daughter of Robert Q.), who in the 1980s donated sizeable amounts of money to Central College, Pella, to be used for scholarships; and Joe Ruckman (son of Clyde), Professor at the University of California, who at his death in 1993, generously remembered his alma mater, Simpson College, Indianola, in his will. Simpson named a Genetic/Cell Laboratory in the Science Hall in his honor.

The Osee Mathews Family, Entrepreneurs, Professionals, Adventurers

A truly energetic and able family who came to Red Rock in 1843 was the family of Osee Mathews, Sr. They contributed much to both the commercial and professional development of the town, but as soon as various danger signals began to flash, they left one by one for points west to seek better opportunities for making a living.

Having lived in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, and Ohio, they finally tried Iowa. Originally they settled in Lake Prairie Township (Pella area) where they were the first white settlers, but with the large influx of Hollanders, they sold their lands, bought land in the Red Rock area, and moved there with their 10 children.

Sons Reuben and Homer became Red Rock's first doctors. Son Osee Mathews, Jr., had a sawmill and Simpson Bell Mathews operated a steam flour mill. He ran a general merchandise store as well, and both were prosperous business men in Red Rock.

Patty Mathews married George Enoch Jewett and became the mother of George Anson Jewett, who was born in a log cabin in Red Rock, graduated from Central College in Pella, and became a successful entrepreneur in Des Moines as the owner of Jewett Lumber Company, Jewett Typewriter, and other enterprises. The Jewett family, fourth generation, still owns the Jewett Lumber Company in Des Moines.

Caroline Mathews married George Reynolds, a prosperous farmer and staunch abolitionist, who had worked for the cause of freedom of the slaves even before they left Ohio. Some of the Reynolds children attended Central College in Pella, a remarkable accomplishment for any pioneer family. Son Edgar became famous as a '49er, as is related in Chapter 6.

The Mathews' family members eventually all left Red Rock. While they lived in Red Rock, however, their participation in business and community was always at a high level and their contributions significant. More will be told of this illustrious family in succeeding chapters.

Chapter 4

PIONEER RED ROCK TOWN

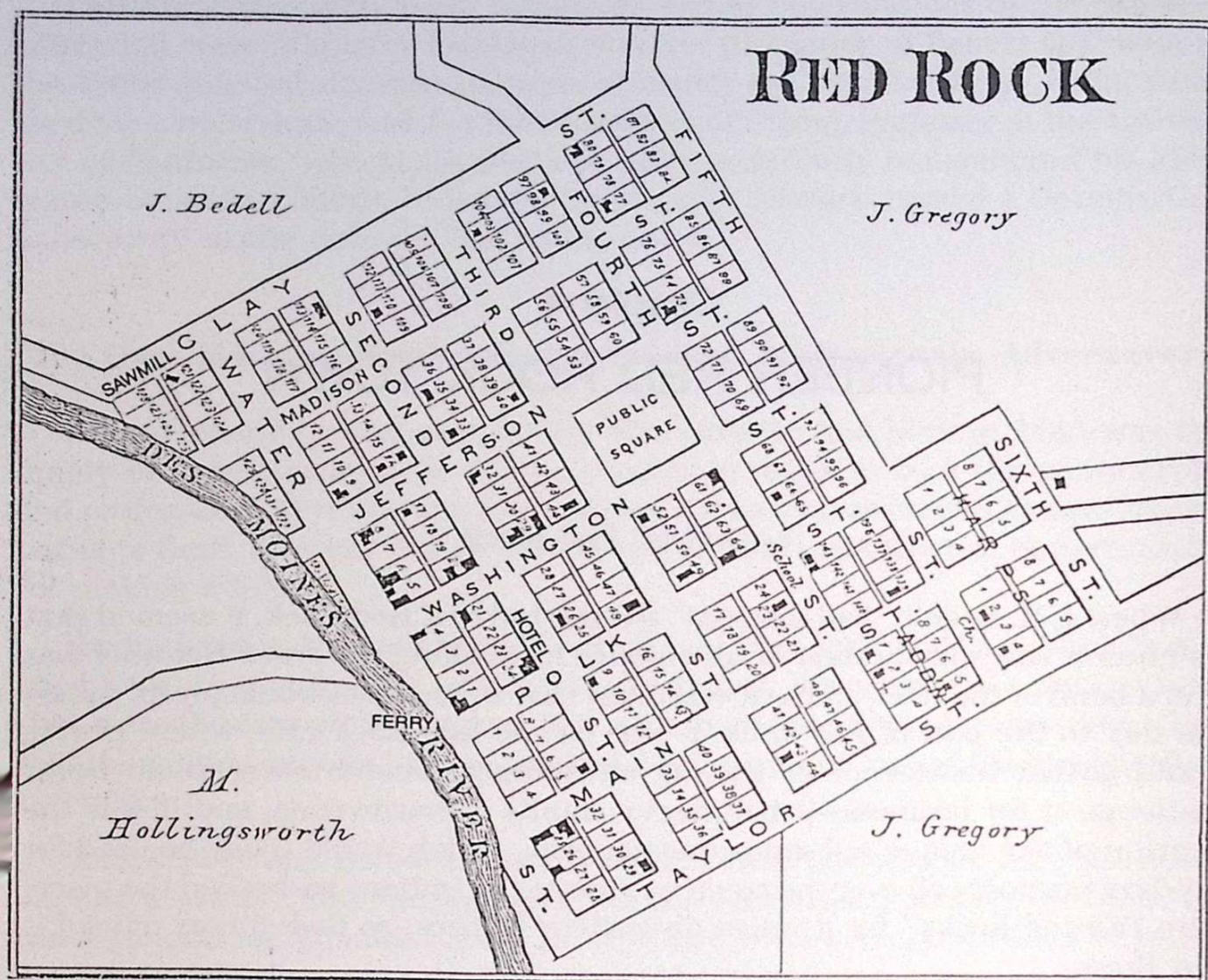
Layout of Red Rock

When J. R. Bedell "had a dream" for the town of Red Rock, it seemed that his chosen site was the best of all possible sites along the river. Not only was it on a bend of the river, and so it was likely that steamboats would ply its waters one day to the port of Red Rock, it was on the Red Rock Line where people would gather because of its trading advantages. Inland towns could never challenge it for business—it had heavy stands of hardwoods, and it was the location of the unique red sandstone deposits, which would likely be used for building purposes all over the country. Just as the Indians had called the place, "the Painted Rocks" for its most distinctive feature, so Bedell now named it Red Rock.

From the plat map it can be noted that the town is platted directly on the north shore of the Des Moines River. It is six blocks in width. Water Street is on the river, and parallel to it are Second to Sixth Streets. The cross streets are from left to right: Clay, Madison, Jefferson, Washington, Polk, and Taylor, all names of heroes of that time. A public square one block on each side, was planned as a place for use by the whole community. No one can remember, however, that there ever was a square for community use and think it might have been a public pasture. Later the schoolhouse was constructed in this location. The Church was on Fifth Street, one block north.

Because the west side of the town nestled along the Des Moines River which veered off in a northwest direction, the streets ran diagonally from true directions, which makes it difficult to describe locations.

The largest buildings were close to the waterfront, and they were business places. The smaller buildings were the dwellings. Each house was located on a large lot, because the town dwellers had to supply many of their own needs. Therefore they needed a garden and an orchard, perhaps a plot to grow some corn, a hen house, a shed for the horse(s) and carriage, and another for a cow. However, in many instances, the horse and cow instead of having a shelter, were tied up in the back yard. And, of course, there was the inevitable privy in everyone's back yard.



Marion County Atlas, 1875

Plat of Red Rock, 1875. Location of sawmill, hotel, ferry, school, and public square shown, also various undesignated businesses and houses.

To get the feel of the young town in the early years, it is necessary to look at the types of businesses which were established as well as the talents and temperaments of the people who came. The settlers' lives became entwined with the story of the town.

Commercial Enterprises

To serve this booming town, which soon numbered about 1,000 people, a number of establishments was required.

The hotel was on Second Street, near the boat landing on the river (see map). It appears to have been a large building. The hotel, a fine brick building, was indeed a focal point for visitors coming into Red Rock. The hotel was located where the Merle Prices lived in future years. They often dug up bricks which had once been part of the fine old hotel.

A hotel was an absolute necessity because transportation was so poor, and the distance one could travel in a day so small that the traveler had to stay many nights along the way. In addition to the hotel, there were usually rooms available in private houses for those passing through.

A newcomer to Knoxville in September, 1845, wrote in his journal, "I have concluded my business here, and I expect to leave in the morning bound for Red Rock some thirty miles on this side of Raccoon Forks (Des Moines). As there is no chance of boarding at Knoxville, the newly chosen county seat, as that settlement is small, I intend stopping at Red Rock this fall and winter, it being the largest town in the county." (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept. 25, 1930)

Many of the customers were not as desirable as the above mentioned Dr. Cunningham. Milt Johnson owned the hotel and later his son, Dr. Peter M. Johnson, became the owner. He had his daughters tend to the business. Daughter Catherine (who later married Reuben Core) often told of their experiences, such as the night when Jesse and Frank James, the notorious bandit brothers, came to book a room. She and her sister were frightened, but their father told them to act as usual. She said afterwards that the James boys acted like real gentlemen, but she was soon to learn that the brothers had robbed a bank just before coming to Red Rock. Then, when cleaning the room, the sisters found \$210 wrapped up in the window shade. Seemingly, the James boys had made a careless and costly mistake.

Inasmuch as it is known that both those of high estate and unsavory characters passed through Red Rock in its early history, it would be interesting to see an old hotel Register of Guests (if such a record ever existed), to note the origin and nature of the passing personnel who frequented this hotel.

Ferry Service

In order to have visitors come from across the river to conduct trade with the farmers south of the river, or to get from Red Rock to the courthouse in Knoxville, the county seat, a ferry was essential. The first to operate a ferry was a man by the name of Martin Hollingsworth, an early settler whose farm lay along the river. He could operate the ferry from his own property. His descendants lived in Red Rock until the end of its days.

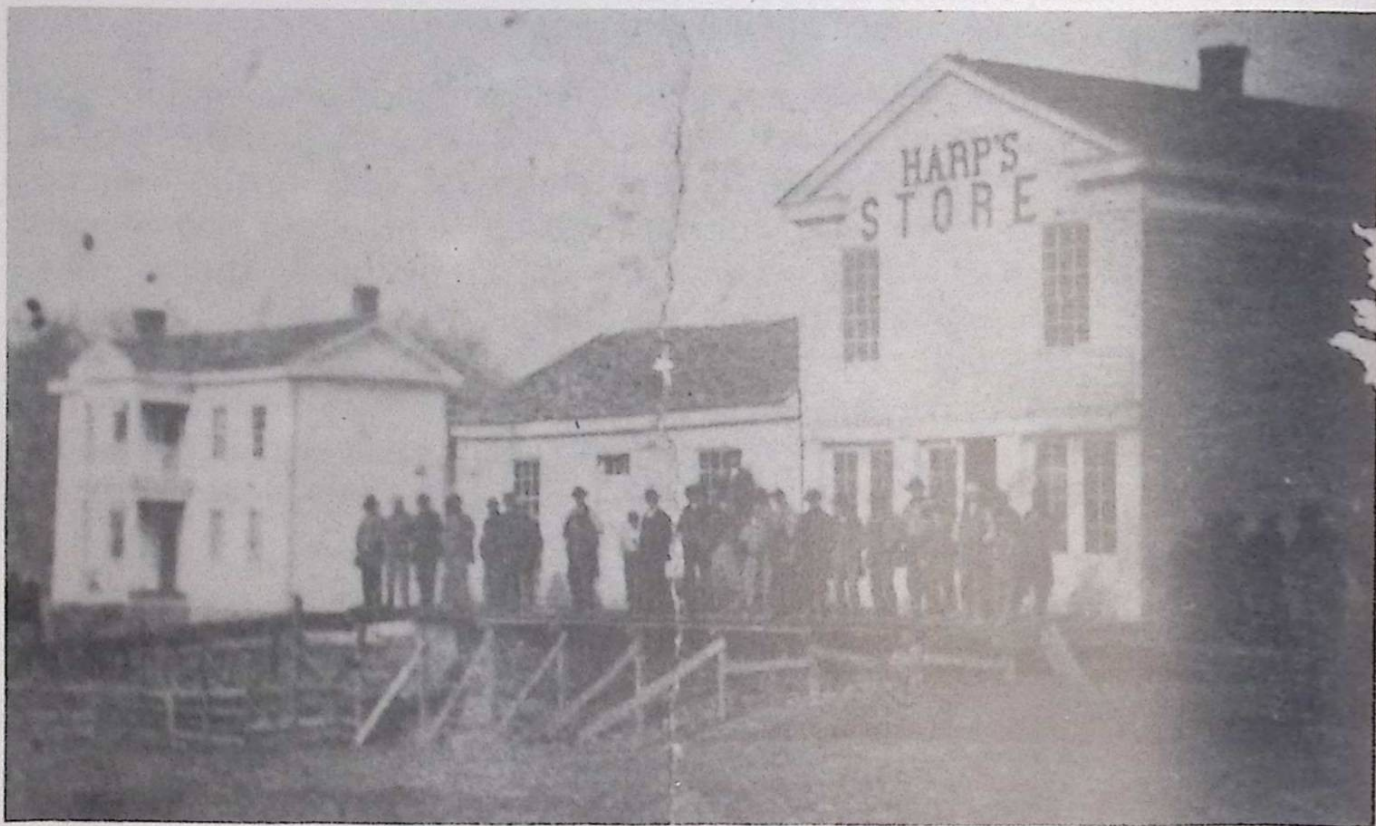
In 1852, the County passed an ordinance whereby ferries would be supervised by the County. Applications to operate the ferry at Red Rock were made by John D. Bedell, Simpson Mathews, and Samuel Wilkins. The court ruled in favor of Samuel Wilkins "for a term of three years the exclusive jurisdiction and right of operating a ferry for one mile up and one mile down the Des Moines River from the town of Red Rock."

The Court ruled that the following ferry fees could be charged: For each person, 5 cents; for a man and horse, 10 cents; for a two-horse wagon, 25 cents; for an extra span of horses or oxen, 15 cents; for each loose horse or ox, 5 cents; and for each hog or sheep, 2 cents. (*Union Historical Company*, 1881, 379)

The ferry was the only means of transportation across the River for 54 years, until 1897, when a bridge was built across the Des Moines River.

Grocery (General Merchandise) Stores

At one time, Red Rock had three grocery stores. One was a two-story, impressive looking general merchandise store owned by brothers James and Con Harp, who had in the earliest days operated a trading post and bought furs



Harold Hastings

Harp's Store and Dwelling in Red Rock, 1850s.

from the Indians. The Harps, who had come from Tennessee, were ambitious, energetic merchants who had to transport their merchandise by horse and wagon or ox teams from Keokuk, along unimproved roads, so as to make an interesting variety of goods to offer for sale. One of the Leuty's, for example, who lived across the river reports in his journal the purchase of six pressed glass sauce dishes, which are evidently still in the family.

Another general store down by the river, just above where the bridge was later built, was owned by Simpson Bell Mathews, a prime mover in the development of early Red Rock and of whom more will be said later. There was a drug store which was to play a grim role in the town's history. Surprisingly, there was a book store, a pool hall, a blacksmith shop for making horseshoes which, of course, was essential in those days of horse transportation, and two saloons—the Collins and the Blue Goose.

Booze played a significant part in the story of Red Rock through the years. During prohibition days in the 1920s, federal agents frequently raided the town. Bootlegging of alcohol and beer was a brisk undercover business in a few private homes during much of Red Rock's history.

Red Rock, unlike many towns around, had its own post office, (only for a few years), and James Harp was the first postmaster. Perhaps, as so often happened in former days, the post office was in his store.

Cooperative Security Services

James Harp once organized a famous wolf hunt for his fellow townspeople. It was an entertaining sport as well as a necessary activity. Packs of hungry wolves roamed the prairie and constituted a fearful danger for the people in Red Rock. One night, he called all his neighbors together and suggested a wolf shoot to solve the problem. One of Harp's oxen had died, and he used it for bait, placing it just outside the town. The men, each armed with his own gun, sat in a wide semi-circle about the bait to wait for the wolves. While they were waiting, Harp served his guests fresh honey from a bee tree he had found in the woods that day.

It was difficult to see in the darkness, but they all shot at the black shapes moving about the bait. The next morning they found the ground littered with dead and wounded wolves. Food must have been especially scarce that winter, for despite the shootings, the wolves continued to come to the bait night after night.

Legal Services

Early Red Rock had its lawyers, too, and many legal cases were tried. E. B. Starr was the first lawyer, and others were to follow. Elected justices of the peace acted as judges. Lawyers received their training by "reading law" in the office of another lawyer and helping him in his work, thus getting practical experience at the same time. It was said that some of the lawyers pretended more knowledge of the law than they really had, and by reading out of some law book could convince the judge that this or that really was a law and thus they could win their case.

Perhaps the earliest case to come up in Red Rock was the divorce case filed by a Mrs. Ray Alfrey, daughter of Osee Mathews, Sr., influential Red Rock citizen. She asked legal separation from her husband Ray Alfrey on the grounds of "inconstancy," presumably unfaithfulness. The case was successfully conducted by a lawyer named Alley. Mr. Alfrey was gone at the time and when he got back home again, he learned that he no longer had a wife. He departed the country and was not heard of again.

The elected justice of the peace had considerable authority in the earliest days. Boundary disputes and land claims rights were often brought by speculators who came in from elsewhere to acquire lands already claimed and

settled. These matters constituted a large part of the legal cases entered. John D. Bedell, the town's founder, was for a time the justice of the peace, and he ruled on such cases.

A seemingly insignificant matter which became quite heated was the case of Brown vs. Startz, in which both parties claimed ownership of a certain dog. The justice of the peace ruled in favor of Startz. In celebration of his victory, Startz proposed to treat all those present at the trial. It is said that there were more tipsy people in Red Rock that day than there had ever been before.

Medical Services

No one could be more welcome in any settlement than a doctor, and Red Rock was fortunate in having good doctors from the very beginning. Like the lawyer, the doctor often received his training from "reading" in an established doctor's office and working with the doctor on his cases, thus learning by practical experience much of what he had to know.

The first to open a medical practice in Red Rock was Reuben Mathews, son of Osee Mathews, Sr. He was later joined by his brother Homer who had also "read" for his medical training, and the two were known as "Old Doc" and "Young Doc." The two Mathews brothers were indeed pioneer doctors. No real roads existed, only trails, and when called out at night, whichever doctor who went carried a lighted lantern in his buggy in order to see those trails. On the way back the horse was often allowed free rein as he knew the way home, thus allowing the doctor to get a much needed nap.

The doctor had a few medicines with him packed in a leather bag strapped to his chest to treat for the most common ailments. He generally carried castor oil, calomel, quinine, and often an instrument to bleed the patient, a common remedy for various diseases, and pliers to pull teeth. The doctor acted also as a dentist. Often the household visited had a supply of home remedies which ranged from herbs, bark and cherry tea which the wife or grandmother had gathered from the woods as the Indians had done before them.

Reuben left Red Rock in 1852, off for the California gold rush. Homer moved westward to Nebraska and opened a practice there.

Dr. J.A. Shrader was a physician and surgeon whose arrival in Red Rock in 1867 was a fortunate event. He had graduated from a medical course at the University of Iowa, then practiced in Kansas for two years before coming to Red Rock. He treated malaria which was a scourge in those early days (most people called it ague), sore throats, which were common, cholera, pneumonia, and many other ailments. One winter he treated 23 cases of advanced pneumonia and lost only two of his patients. Whiskey and quinine were prescribed in many cases with good results.

Dr. Shrader was a surgeon as well as a physician. In 1881 he assisted a Knoxville doctor, N. R. Cornell, in performing a caesarean operation on a Mrs. Sinclair who was 40 years old. He gave the anesthetic. Dr. Cornell happened to cut

himself, and Dr. Shrader had to finish the operation. It was successful in that the mother lived, although the baby lived only 7 hours. It was the third operation of its kind in the State and the second successful one. Dr. Shrader performed at least two other caesareans during his career.

Dr. Shrader's life, like that of most of the early families, had its sorrows too. His first wife, Mary Jane, died in childbirth in 1869, at the age of 26 years, and his second wife, Martha, died in 1879, at the age of 30 years in the tragedy described in the next paragraph. His two wives and two infants are buried in the Red Rock Cemetery. Dr. Schrader evidently left Red Rock after that time.

Red Rock also had its drug store. The laws regarding the dispensation of drugs were very loose, and at times serious errors occurred. Dr. Shrader's own family, for example, suffered terrible tragedy when Mrs. Shrader sent their 12-year old son to the drug store for some senna to treat a light illness both she and her mother were experiencing. The druggist mistakenly took a bottle of belladonna, a deadly poison, from the shelf, instead of senna. Both died within minutes of taking the medicine.

A similar error occurred in Knoxville when Caroline, the daughter of Dr. and Mrs. J. T. French, contracted a cold. Her husband, Lt. Melvin Stone, went to the drug store to secure some cough syrup. Through an error, the druggist filled the bottle with aconite, another deadly poison, giving directions that a teaspoon be taken as a dose. It was administered and within 10 minutes death resulted.

The next session of the State Legislature made it obligatory that all poisonous drugs be labeled with a skull and crossbones together with the word POISON in bold red letters.

Dr. Peter M. Johnson who had been a captain in the Civil War, moved to Red Rock from Montezuma in the late 1870s. He had a successful practice in Red Rock and spent the rest of his life there. He was a hotel owner as well, as mentioned earlier. He was referred to as Old Doc Johnson. He had four wives and 14 children, and some of his descendants still live in the Red Rock area. His daughter Catherine became the progenitor of the Cores, prominent citizens of Red Rock through the years. Dr. Peter Johnson died in 1881 and his last wife, Isabella, died in 1909. Both are buried in the Red Rock Cemetery.

Dr. Johnson's ninth child, Catherine, was born in 1857. Her mother was Eliza Girard Johnson, who died when Catherine was three years old. Catherine came with her father to Red Rock when she was a young woman. She later married Reuben Core, youngest son of Isaac and Elizabeth Core in 1879. Reuben had come to Iowa by covered wagon in 1854 when he was 7 years old.

Dr. Johnson's son-in-law, Reuben Core, had only a little schooling in the rural school and had gone to work on his father's farm at an early age and learned to be an efficient farmer.

Reuben amassed and farmed large amounts of land and was known for his full blooded Aberdeen Angus cattle, sometimes as many as 75 to 100. In addi-

tion to grain and crops he planted four acres of orchard with apple, pear, plum, and cherry trees. Reuben and Catherine had ten children, one of whom was Clarence Core who later operated a large farm in the Cordova-Red Rock area.

One of Reuben's granddaughters is Dorothy Core, who married Hugh Templeton, a progressive farmer whose farm was at the east edge of the town of Red Rock. It was through daughter Catherine that Dr. Peter Marshall Johnson left many solid citizens, most of them big farmers, in the Red Rock area. On his tombstone are the words "Gone But Not Forgotten"—true because of the multitude of his descendants.

Manufacturing

Manufacturing had an important economic role in the development of Red Rock. The simplest type of manufacturing was the processing of raw materials, such as wood and grain.

Sawmills and a Grist Mill

Building for a town of 1,000, estimated as the number of people who came to live in Red Rock in its first decade, required a great deal of timber. Though the very earliest homes were of pole and thatch, and a little later of logs, better business places and homes were built at a rapid rate. The beautiful forests surrounding the town provided an excellent source for wood, but sawmills were required to make the timber into usable lumber. Several large creeks which emptied into the Des Moines River near Red Rock provided excellent water power for running sawmills. Sawmills were established in the beginning of Red Rock's history and was one of the few activities which continued to operate until the very end of its history.

The first sawmill was built by Osee Mathews, Jr. in 1846 on Mikesell's Creek (now Brush Creek) about a mile northeast of town. The next was constructed in 1848 by Daniel Hiskey (an ex-schoolteacher) on Mikesell's Creek, two miles north of town. Then in 1854, Wilson Stanley built one on the east side of town, and John D. Bedell built one just on the west side of town, the two latter ones both run by steam. The sawmills were really spewing out lumber at a mighty rate for use in structures in Red Rock as well as for the farmsteads near town.

When Simpson Bell Mathews built a flour or grist mill powered by steam in 1854, he provided a much needed service. Going to Bonaparte or Keosauqua for milling of grain was a long, arduous, and at times hazardous journey. The new mill was quite a sensation, a wonder up and down the valley, especially its steam whistle which was at first frightening for people didn't know what it was and imagined all sorts of fearful situations. Across the road from the mill, Mathews built a fine, large brick house.

Simpson Bell Mathews was an enterprising, forward looking business man, and though he had a good market at home for his flour, he wished to expand it. He obtained freight wagons, several teams of horses and oxen and even a

span of buffaloes. He loaded his wagons with flour as well as goods from his store and set out for the mines in Idaho and Montana. He was a sensation all along the way, largely because of his span of buffaloes. Unfortunately, he was waylaid by Indians who stole his goods, and he lost heavily on this venture.

When the railroad failed to be routed through Red Rock, Mathews decided to leave the area. He sold his mill, and it was moved to Otley. In 1869, he and his wife and four children moved to an Idaho farm, where he and his wife lived the rest of their lives. Three infant Mathews children were left behind, buried in the Red Rock cemetery. One would wonder how Mrs. Simpson (Sarah Jewett) felt about the family's pulling up roots and relocating in a wild new area. Or whether it mattered how she felt.

With the departure of Simpson Bell Mathews, Red Rock lost a good citizen and businessman. It lost the last of the remarkable Mathews family, the offspring of Osee Mathews, Sr., except for Caroline Mathews Reynolds (Mrs. George) and her family, farmers in Summit Township. Most of the Mathews moved to California. Patty Mathews Jewett (Mrs. George) and her family moved to Des Moines.

Other Manufacturing

In 1879, a tobacco factory was located in the southeast part of town. There was also a broom factory and a shingle mill operated by Kate and Dodge Alley. The shingle mill was once owned by Elhannon Mikesell, brother of John Huff Mikesell. The mill was horse powered, and cottonwood trees were used for the shingles. By the time these factories were built, Red Rock had already declined in population, and it continued to decline.

The Quarries

Red Rock people felt they still held one ace in their hands—and that was the deposits of red sandstone which pretty much ringed their town. Rocks from the quarry had been sent by flatboat to Des Moines, where they were used in some of the buildings there. Some of the stone had also gone to St. Louis.

The *State Register*, 1882, said that in New York City it was pronounced by some of the stone experts who saw it, the handsomest stone in America, and prophesied that, "It (the red rock) will make Des Moines the handsomest city in the West in 15 years." (1930, *Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sec. 6, p. 12) Developing this resource was still in the realm of the future. What happened with respect to quarrying the red sandstone will be told in a later chapter.

Chapter 5

PIONEER EDUCATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS

“School days, school days,
Dear old Golden Rule days,
Reading and 'Riting and 'Rithmetic,
Taught to the tune of the hickory stick.
You were my bashful barefoot beau,
I was your queen in calico.
You wrote on my slate
I love you so,
When we were a couple of kids.”

—old ditty

Perhaps, school days were not quite as idyllic as portrayed in this well known little song, yet in retrospect, school was a cherished and shared memory. The song is very apt in that it points out associations which related to the first schools—the hickory stick, the emphasis on the 3 R's, the almost exclusive use of calico for dresses, (and shirts), the barefoot boys (and girls), at least when the weather allowed it, and the slate as the chief writing instrument.

Attention will be focused on the Red Rock School not only because it is one aspect of the the town itself, but also because it was by far the most important institution of learning for the Red Rockers. Blaine School and Union School, two rural schools which served the farmers who had a Red Rock address but lived south across the river, will be described briefly. Central College in Pella (which included primary and high school departments) was a Baptist School and patronized by several Baptist families who believed their children could receive a higher quality of education there—though it was about 10 miles away and therefore inconvenient.

The Red Rock School

The school was one of the two enduring institutions in Red Rock (the other was the church) which lasted almost to the end of its history. These institu-

tions touched more lives than any other, and were the chief factors in giving life meaning, and in drawing the townspeople and countryfolk together.

Many readers, at least the younger ones, have little concept of the nature of the rural school of days gone by, or how it was interwoven into the fabric of the community. The Red Rock experience provides some insights into the role of the rural school in American life.

Schools and school teachers had an important place in the lives of Red Rock folks, principally because they placed a high premium on the education of their children, but also because the school building became a center for their social and community life. Spelling bees, basket socials, song fests, square dances, community potlucks, and certainly school programs put on by their children were highlights in what might have otherwise been a rather humdrum existence. In many instances the school doubled as a church, and likewise the church doubled as the school.

The Red Rock School though located in the town of Red Rock was classified as a rural school. These one-room, one-teacher schools were the centers of education also for those who lived on nearby farms and included the children of very small neighboring villages. (*Cordova children, for example, attended the Red Rock School after Cordova became a town in 1887*).

The rural schools were positioned at intervals of two miles, the distance a child could walk. Each school in this part of Iowa was given a name, rather than a number as was done in some other parts of the State—the name of a nearby creek (Brush Creek School, for example), or the name of a prominent family (Blaine School), or named for some ideal or virtue (Liberty School).

Red Rock School was governed by an elected three-member school board. The Board was responsible for the upkeep of the school as well as for hiring the teacher and managing the school funds.

Red Rock School Building

Already in 1845, a tiny log cabin was built as a schoolhouse. Twenty children from Red Rock village and the surrounding farm community attended. The first teacher was a man by the name of David Hiskey, who later ran a sawmill (1848-49). Most often mentioned about Hiskey is the fact that he was a total abstainer of liquor. He was ridiculed and subjected to indignities for his stand on various occasions. Once the men in the community tried to force him to furnish liquor at the school house for New Year's Day observance, and they almost drowned him in the cold waters of the Des Moines River when he refused. One would have expected that the school patrons would have been grateful to have such a good example for their children instead of taunting him about it.

Nine years later, 1854, the first real schoolhouse was built. Unfortunately, it burned to the ground shortly thereafter. It was the first of three schoolhouses which through the years was destroyed by fire.

Temporarily, the school occupied a two-story building, one room on each

floor, with lower grades on one floor and upper grades on the other. The teachers were Miss Hattie Starr and Mr. A. F. Conrey. They taught 87 pupils, which was an all time record. This two-story building was later moved to another part of town and used as a store.

In the earliest years, most of the pupils walked to school even the smallest of them, though the distance could be as much as two miles. Parents took them by wagon or on horseback when the weather was bad. In the early days when the families were very large, often as many as four or five children from one family attended the school at the same time.

Children could observe their siblings' escapades as well as their triumphs—in the classroom and on the playground. Obviously, it was necessary to make a pact (oral or even unspoken) never to report their siblings' misdeeds to their parents.

Because of the need for labor at home at planting and harvest times, the older boys attended school only in the wintertime, which meant that they could be 18 or more years old before they finished 8th grade. The smaller children breathed easier when these older ones were absent because of the teasing and rough treatment they often received from them. Likely, the teachers felt the same way.

Typically, the children of all ages and both sexes played together at noon and recess times. Often they engaged in some game chosen and directed by the older boys, often regarded as "bullies." Morning and afternoon recesses of fifteen minutes each were the times pupils lived for, and pom pom pullaway, crack the whip (a fearful game for those on the end of the line), baseball, climbing trees (though forbidden), winter snowball fights from behind snow forts which took days to build, and sliding down Cemetery Hill were times of ecstasy—or disaster. The play time intervals were always so short, and the times inside the school seemed so long!

Inside the school, favorite diversions were spelldowns—at least a favorite for those who could spell—listening in on the other grades' classes, passing notes while the teacher was holding another class, pulling on the braids of the girl ahead, or dipping them in one's inkwell. The most awful thing possible and hardest to live down was being twitted that a person liked someone of the opposite sex.

Teachers and Teaching

Because of the lack of trained teachers, almost anyone who could read and seemed reasonably intelligent was considered qualified to teach. In some cases, it was necessary for the candidate to present a letter of recommendation from a respected citizen when applying. More often a bright young person was approached and urged to fill a teaching position. In 1858, the State Legislature voted to establish the Office of County Superintendent of Schools, which would supervise all the rural schools. Standards for teachers continued to be upgraded through the years.

Pupils had their thoughts as to what school was all about—as much play as possible. The teachers wanted to educate young citizens and do a creditable job so as to insure their rehiring—hence the age-old tension.

Textbooks were hard to get and not affordable for all students. It was customary to use Webster's Speller for the first text—pupils learned to spell before they learned to read. Reading began in the third grade. (Teachers would scream today at such methods). McGuffey's Readers were standard texts for all schools. They not only provided practice in reading, but were also the source of good moral precepts though perhaps not too interesting. Pupils started studying numbers in the third grade, using Ray's Arithmetic if possible. For other courses, those pupils who had any type of textbook at home brought them to school, and they were shared, even though the teacher might have to adjust to using a variety of texts for a course.

Paper was difficult to get, so pupils wrote their lessons on a slate with a slate pencil. A little spit on a rag was the standard way to clean a slate. Water was preferable, of course, but not always obtainable.

Tragedy comes to an Early Red Rock Teacher

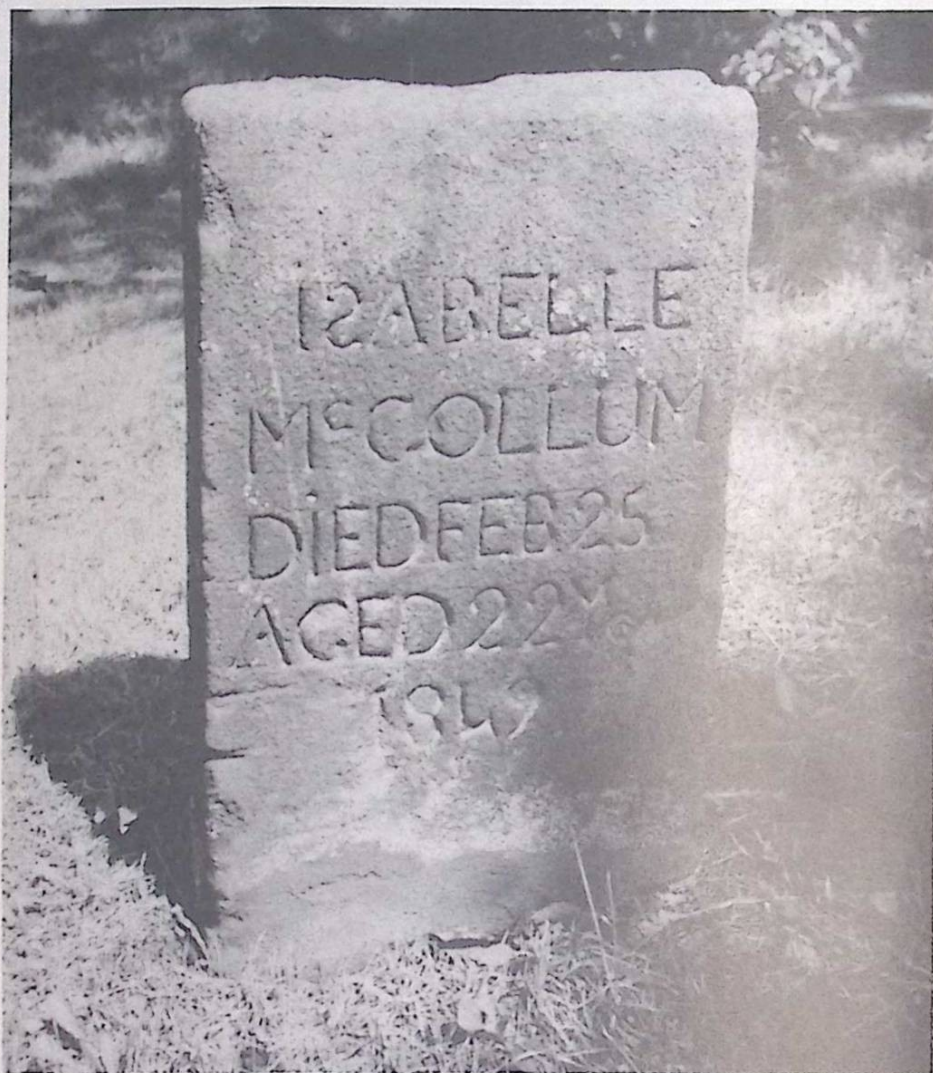
During the school year, 1848-49, just three years after the first tiny log schoolhouse was built, a husband and wife pair taught in the Red Rock School when one of Red Rock's most tragic events occurred. The teachers were 22 year old—Isabelle Haynes McCollum, daughter of Red Rock pioneers, Jacob and Elizabeth Haynes, and Isabelle's husband John McCollum, an itinerant preacher. The pay of a circuit rider preacher was pitifully small and uncertain. Even though Isabelle and John lived on land owned by her father and had a sizeable garden, a cow, a pig, and some chickens, they needed additional income, so both taught school. They commuted from their farm to the village school on horseback.

February 25, 1849, was a bitterly cold day. When school was dismissed in the afternoon, Isabelle learned to her dismay that John was keeping one of his pupils to stay after school for disciplinary reasons. Therefore, John would have to stay also. John and Isabelle agreed that she should go on home without him and start doing the chores.

Isabelle went to the stable where they kept their horses, bridled her horse, and led him out to a tree stump which she used to mount the horse. As she placed her foot in the stirrup to get up on the horse (nice women rode side saddle), the horse moved away from the stump. Her foot was caught in the stirrup, her hold on the saddle was broken, and she was dragged downward by the frightened horse for a considerable distance before the animal voluntarily stopped. She was dead half an hour later. It was said that if she hadn't had to ride side saddle, the accident might not have happened.

Isabelle was the first person to be buried in the plot of ground which her father Jacob Haynes had given to the town to be used as the Red Rock Cemetery.

Located in the middle of the cemetery is the tombstone about two feet high, which her father carved out of the red sandstone and engraved on it the name "Isabelle" in letters four inches high. The letter "S" is written backwards. (*For some reason, the grave is not listed in the Marion County Cemetery Book, but the grave may be found rather easily—it is in the center of the cemetery.*)



Harriet Heusinkveld

Isabelle Haynes McCollum, the first burial in Red Rock Cemetery, February, 1849.

Blaine School

Most of the farmers, the Teters, Leutys, Ruckmans, Rineharts and others, who lived south of the river were in the Blaine School district. Their school was located about 1 mile south of the present-day intersection of Highway 14 with State road G-40 (Pleasantville road). It was on the site where the historical marker for the Dragoon Trail now stands. The school was named for Captain William Blaine, farmer and Civil War veteran. He was the first and only teacher in Union Township for many years.

Blaine was a stern but kind-hearted teacher. However, he had his own peculiar methods of making a point—perhaps related to his days as a Captain in the Army. For example, every Monday morning, Captain Blaine checked the children's hands to see if they were clean, and many a time he dipped a corn-cob in water, then in ashes, and rubbed it over a child's hands, scouring off the dirt. After such a treatment, the children would not likely come to school with dirty hands again. Anyone who has walked barefoot over corncobs would understand why.

He made a comb out of a cow's horn, softening the horn in boiling water, flattening it and sawing teeth into it. He used it on the pupils' hair when they did not comb it themselves. Also not so comfortable.

On one occasion, a boy started a fight by throwing slates with wooden frames. Captain Blaine picked up a stove poker and caught the slates on the end of it so that no one would get hurt. During the winter, when many older boys attended school, there was usually at least one good fight each year.

A crippled boy helped Captain Blaine when the school was crowded. When the attendance was light, men twenty-five years old and older could be admitted on payment of a tuition fee. (Walker, 1938, 4)

On Saturday evenings, a singing school was held, conducted by the neighborhood men who had musical talent. They used a tuning fork to get the pitch. For years, Baptist Church services were held in the schoolhouse and, at times, the Seven Day Adventists used it for classes.



Dorothy Templeton

Blaine School, 1913

The Blaine School was one of the last of the Marion County schools to close. During the years, many pupils had studied, and many teachers had taught in the Blaine School before it was finally closed, and it became a dear memory. In August 1963, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers took over the land on which

it stood to make way for grading of the new Highway 14. They asked for bids on the old school building, and it was sold to W. B. Rinehart, the highest bidder, for \$126.



Marion County Museum, Knoxville
Union School, south of the river, 1921.

Union School

The Union School building still stands (in 1993), though it was no longer used as a schoolhouse after the reorganization of rural schools in the late 1950s. Unfortunately, it is in dilapidated condition, perhaps too much so to be restored. A pity! It is on the Pleasantville road (G-40) about a mile from the intersection with Highway #14. It is interesting to speculate on its unique feature of having three windows on the east side and seven windows on the west.

Union School didn't have as many pupils as Red Rock School—usually only 12 to 20. Some of the teachers who old timers remember are Grace Cronkhite Karr, Ruth Perkey, Wanda Howard Jones, Joy Black, Betty Jones Conklin, Mabel Brush, and Joe Ruckman.



Marion County Museum, Knoxville
Grace Cronkhite (later Grace Karr) teacher, Union School, 1921.

Central College, Pella, Iowa

Several families preferred to send their children to a private school. The Baptists in Pella had early established a university (1853) which for a time provided lower education as well as college courses. Tuition for a year was \$9 for the Primary Department; \$12 for the Academic Department, \$16 for the Preparatory Department and \$20 for the University Level. It was indeed a luxury to send children to this school in preference to their own school, where tuition was free.

George Jewett of Red Rock conveys some of the tremendous excitement in going away to school as he writes for the *Knoxville Journal*, Jubilee Edition, 1930 (Sec. 10, p. 6):

"In 1857 when I was 10 years old, the first building known as Old Central, was built. My mother decided to move to Pella to put Homer and me in school. It was a memorable occasion for me when our household goods were placed in a wagon, and we had just passed up the hill beyond the Core place, when a man came along on horseback and said, "Where are you going to, Bud?" and how proudly I answered, "to Pella to go to school."

"Mother rented a house just opposite the campus west of where the Library now stands.

"Soon after our arrival I heard a bell ring and I looked about me and finally located from whence came the sound—the top of the college building. I went boy-like and climbed the stairs and then took the ladder until I was standing by the bell. I think Big Ben in London never sounded half as loud as did old Central's bell on the 9th of September, 1857.

"What a fine thing for the boys and girls of Marion County to have such an institution in their midst. See who took advantage of it. Bent (Eliphalet) Ruckman, John R. and Joe Ruckman, Homer Jewett, Lucius Mathews, Alfrey Mathews, Ada Mathews, John H. Kellenberger and many others from Red Rock."

The college records were destroyed in a 1922 fire, so it is not possible to list all the Red Rock students who ever attended Central. However, an 1859-60 catalog which was discovered indicates that in addition to the above mentioned enrollees in 1859 were C. J. Amos, Samuel Reese, Caroline Reynolds, Sarah Summer, Cynthia Jewett, Walter Bell, James Price, James Reese, Jane Horseman, Grace Horseman, Mary Reese, Evaline Stamper, and Rachel Kellenberger.

Red Rock accounted for a substantial percentage of Central's students in the 1850s and 1860s. The students from Red Rock were for the most part from the Ruckman and Mathews families and children of the Mathews daughters, the Jewetts and the Reynolds.



Dorothy Templeton

Wrestling at Central College, 1861. John Ruckman of Red Rock is in the back row, left, facing front. Others pictured are unknown.

Changes in the Red Rock school system will be discussed in Chapter 11, The Red Rock School in the Twentieth Century

The Red Rock Church

The Church, Methodist in its earliest years and Independent Evangelical in its later years, existed from the beginning of Red Rock's history and lasted to the end, but with a lapse of a number of years from about 1855 to 1890 when there was no church building or congregation.

Unfortunately, early records of the church have been destroyed. In 1951, however, a pamphlet recalling as much of the church history as could be remembered was published, the newspaper and local members providing information for this incomplete history of the church.

The earliest bearers of the Christian faith to Red Rock were itinerant ministers, also known as circuit riders. One of these, a man whose surname was Pardo, was a missionary to the Indians. Another minister to the Indians, not so highly regarded, was Spurlock, of whom it was said that he made "bad" money and had a weakness for whiskey. John McCollum, husband of the unfortunate Isabelle Haynes McCollum already mentioned, was another circuit

rider. The circuit rider ministers must be commended in that they worked with little or no salary to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ and had to rely on other types of work to support themselves.

The first religious services for the early white settlers were held at the home of Joel Worth in 1844 and were led by an itinerant Methodist minister. Soon after that, the Baptists held services in their homes for the few members of their faith who lived in the community. A circuit rider, the Rev. M. J. Post from Agency (near Ottumwa), conducted their meetings. The Baptists also held services in the Blaine Schoolhouse across the river.

The Methodists and the Baptists were the two principal denominations, and in the years to come a few Seven Day Adventists and Latter Day Saints were represented in the community, but they never had a congregation in Red Rock. Before the first church was erected in Red Rock, the Rev. Claiborne Hall, an ordained pastor of the Church of Christ held the first Sunday School sessions in Red Rock.

Claiborne Hall was an unusual character, a man of many interests and involvements. He came to Red Rock in 1843 and settled four miles north of the village. He cleared 13 acres of land and planted it. He was elected County Surveyor in 1846, County Sheriff in 1849, County Recorder in 1851, and County Superintendent of Schools in 1858. He was an active member of the Democratic Party, and was the editor of *The Democratic Standard*, the first paper in the county issued in support of the party. Quite an overwhelming list for a man who was first of all a minister. Hall left Red Rock for Knoxville in 1854.

The Methodists built the first church in Red Rock in 1855, a brick church at the cost of \$1,000. It had a membership of thirty and a Sunday School attendance of sixty. E. B. Wright was the Sunday School superintendent.

After this auspicious start, for some unexplained reason, interest in the church flagged, attendance dwindled, and finally, the church was torn down. A reawakening of interest in the church occurred in 1890, and the life of the church after that date will be discussed in a later chapter.

Chapter 6

RESTLESSNESS AND RESETTLING

With all the land across the country that was available for the settlers to choose from, and considering the lack of knowledge about any place, what a gamble it was for a family to make a choice as to which place to stop. To devote themselves to building houses, planting crops, and to joining with other settlers to build a long term community for themselves, as well as for their descendants as yet unborn, was a momentous decision.

It can be noted how many of the "Red Rockers" came from Ohio. However, Ohio, in most cases was not their first home after arriving in the United States. They were among those who "leapfrogged" across the country, having lived in an Eastern state, then getting "itchy feet" for at least one more try at finding an even better place. Families from Red Rock tried settling in Kansas, for example, other groups moved to Oregon, and a family or two tried their luck in Nebraska. A number of them were bitterly disappointed and came back to Red Rock.

Some of the sons of the original settlers chafed under the demands of making a living in the humdrum, rigorous ambience of the farm, or they were eager to be in control of their own destinies instead of "falling in" with their parents' plans for them. The lure of the unknown, perhaps the rich area of the West called to both old and young.

The discovery of gold in California evoked the wildest excitement and the strongest incentive possible for hurrying westward to seek untold riches—it was worth high stakes to participate in this lottery. Seeing the hundreds of gold seekers who passed through the County in 1849 and in the next year or two, in such long lines that they had to wait for days for one of the ferries to transport them across the river, could not help but whet their appetites to join in the adventure. Some who went never returned to Red Rock; others had little to show for their attempts except for some good stories to swap with those who had had similar experiences.

Those who stayed home dreamed of the riches the '49ers would bring back but at the same time feared for their safety.

The "fever" to go to California to find gold claimed sons of two early Red Rock families, Wiliam Jackson Mikesell and Edgar Reynolds, grandson of Osee

Mathews. Their exploits are well documented and will be used so as to understand the life of the gold seekers, as little is known of this interesting subculture in American life.

“Jack” Mikesell, Forty-Niner.

William Jackson Mikesell, “Jack,” oldest son of John Huff and Phebe Burch Mikesell (first wife), died in January 19, 1911. His death occasioned a front page story in the *Republican Citizen*, Rawlins, Kansas, where he had been a resident for a number of years. The headline read “UNCLE” JACK MIKESELL DEAD. ANOTHER FRONTIERSMAN CROSSES OVER THE GREAT DIVIDE.”



Larry Mikesell

William Jackson Mikesell and wife Phebe Alley Mikesell left for the California Gold Rush, 1849.

The newspaper account told of Mikesell's departure from Red Rock in 1849 at age 25 with his wife Phebe Alley. They joined a train of 173 persons, 27 wagons, 300 oxen, and 39 ponies, among which were Mikesell's own two favorite ponies. Oxen were favored over horses because they could eat grass, which could be found all along the way, whereas horses needed grain. In case of a severe shortage of food, the oxen could be butchered for meat, which was favored over horse flesh. All the men carried guns, pistols, plenty of powder, lead and caps, and provisions sufficient for 100 days.

They left Des Moines on the 11th day of June, 1849, following the stagecoach route to Council Bluffs, where they were joined by two plainsmen who were to act as guides and scouts. There was only a single ferry at the Missouri River,

and the gold seekers massed at that point were so numerous that their group had to wait eight days for their turn to cross.

They followed the trail made by the Mormons two years previous, as fine a road as they had ever seen. Some places along the Platte River were wide enough for fifteen or more teams to pass abreast.

The afternoon of July 4, their scouts came riding in and reported that 150 Indians were approaching. Hurriedly, the group arranged the wagons in a circle and corraled their animals inside the circle. As the Indians approached, Mikesell recognized the bloodthirsty Chief Spotted Tail, whom he had met before when hunting with him in Red Rock. It did not take long to rout the Indians, and they met no more of them on their journey.

Crossing the desert in Nevada was another horror, as their wagon wheels bogged down to the rims in the sand, and all had to get out of the wagons and walk in the scorching sands. They became so dehydrated, they almost died.

After more than four months of travel, they arrived in California. Mikesell looked for and found some gold, but for the most part, he followed in the footsteps of his father, John Huff Mikesell, who had raised vegetables to sell to the Indians in Red Rock. Jack raised vegetables, which he sold to the other gold seekers. In 1853, he decided to return home. This time, they traveled from San Francisco by boat through the Panama Canal to New York City and then by land back to Red Rock, their old home town.

Jack bought a farm, built a beautiful home, and farmed for 18 years in the Red Rock area. As happened to so many, he met with financial reverses during the Panic of 1873. In 1879, the pioneer spirit took hold of him again, and this time the family and their six children left for wild, mostly unoccupied Kansas.

He and the boys took homesteads there, and though it was hardly possible to get rich in droughty Kansas, they got along reasonably well. They became leading citizens, and they were well known for their hospitality to settlers passing through. His wife Phebe died in 1901 and he died in 1911 at age 82. He was buried in Kansas. His family had left Red Rock for good.

The Mathews Family Goes West—1849 and 1852

In 1849, George Jewett (married to Patty Mathews), Simpson Bell Mathews, and three of their Reynolds nephews went with a wagon train bound for California to seek their fortunes in the gold rush and seemingly it was a scouting trip, too. All later returned to Red Rock and reentered its commercial activities.

Undoubtedly, this time the Mathews brothers had intended to put down permanent roots in Red Rock, but when the Flood of 1851 on the Des Moines River devastated thousands of acres of farmland, they were disheartened by the calamity and decided to investigate the lands in California.

In 1852, three brothers—Osee Mathews, Jr., Warren Mathews, and Dr. Reuben Mathews—organized a wagon train to go to California. One independent com-

pany of this train was made up of 50 men, women, and children from Red Rock. (No roster of participants was kept). A company, which ranged from eight to ten wagons, needed enough men to handle guard duty, but should be small enough to move easily and quickly. The Mathews brothers, Osee, Jr., Warren, and Dr. Reuben and their families comprised a good part of the company. They hired their 19-year old nephew, Edgar Reynolds, son of sister Caroline, as the driver of their own ox-drawn covered wagon.

Fortunately, young Edgar Reynolds kept a diary of the 2,000 mile journey. It constitutes one of the most valuable sources available for a description of the cross-country trek to California. Almost one hundred and fifty years later (1991) Edgar's diary was made the subject of the book, *'I Am Bound for California: The Overland Diary of Edgar Reynolds, 1852*, edited and annotated by Robert N. Manley and published by Midgard Press, Lincoln, Nebraska.

It is an incredible story, an enlightening picture of the thousands of men, women, and children, who joined in the trek to California, most of them to find gold. It was a subculture which existed for a short time in U. S. history. Surprisingly, a prominent theme of the book was the camaraderie, the good fellowship, the fun, and sense of mutual responsibility among those in a wagon train.

The Red Rock contingent joined the rest of the wagon train, which was made up of people from many states, at Kanessville near Council Bluffs and ferried across the Missouri River from that point. They found themselves in the midst of thousands of other travelers most of them in covered wagons, but some on horses or mules, jostling each other for position on the trail. Their animals—horses, mules, oxen, cows, chickens—were estimated to number at least 50,000.

When organized and on the road, the train—referred to as the greatest show on earth—was estimated as 700 miles long. Each company in the train was like a moving village. The travelers hoped to be able to make 15 to 20 miles a day and then to find an evening camp where there was firewood, water, and grass.

They followed much the same route as that Jack Mikesell had taken. By 1852, thousands of oxen had died along the way, many from overwork, and their whitened skulls along the roadside were almost like a guidebook to the most popular route to follow. Edgar Reynolds said in his diary, "About every minute I could hear ox bones crack under the wheels of my wagon." (Manley: 1991, 23).

The '49ers saw many newly made graves along the way; the privations at times were difficult; the constant dire rumors about cholera and Indians were distressing. Actually, the fears about Indians were, for the most part, unwarranted. Time after time, Indians guided lost wagon trains back to the trail, they helped the travelers find grass for their exhausted animals, and in the Nevada deserts, they carried water to stranded and helpless travelers. Yet, the trekkers saw many "turnabouts," the people who decided they couldn't take any more and were retracing their steps homeward.

The Mathews brothers realized how important it was to care for the animals.

Periodically the wagon train halted for several days in order to rest the stock. As a result, only three of their animals, two oxen and one cow, died along the way.

The Mathews wagons were admirably managed by Edgar, who had received some advice from his uncles, who had made the trip in 1849, concerning different routes. After various experiences, both harrowing and delightful, the Mathews contingent reached California in September, before the passes were filled with snow (as happened to the famous Donner group who had arrived when big snows blocked the passes, and several of them died). The Mathews had planned well as to provisions, as they still had flour to spare when they reached California, which they sold to traders there.

After their arrival in California, the Mathews brothers acquired land in Tulare County and planted wheat, turnips, and other vegetables. They built a water-powered flour mill. They founded and named the town of Visalia, California (today—1993—it is a city of 75,000 people). Reuben and Warren Mathews decided that though gold wasn't so easy to obtain, California was a good place in which to pioneer, and they stayed in Visalia, the town they had brought into being, and never returned to Red Rock.

Their nephew, Edgar Reynolds, however, after thirteen years of adventure in the western states, returned to Red Rock and married the sweetheart he had left behind, a Pella school teacher by the name of Electa Foote. Their wedding took place in Otley, Iowa.

They farmed in the Red Rock area for a time, then moved to Council Bluffs, finally moving on to Tecumseh, Nebraska, which became their final home. Edgar died in 1919, and Electa died in 1924.

To end an already good story, the Edgar and Frances Reynolds Research Center was founded in Tecumseh, Nebraska, in 1977. The Center is devoted to preserving the countless stories of individuals and families who traveled and settled this land. The library and archives of the Center are open for research.

Edgar Reynolds and his family had made a name for themselves in Nebraska, but were another branch of the Mathews family who had left Red Rock.

The population of Red Rock was somewhat diminished as a result of the upheaval and the departure of a number of its people, headed for gold in California, or for other points west.

Chapter 7

SETBACKS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

Floods

The Great Flood of 1851

(To understand the magnitude of the 1851 flood, one should compare it with the 1993 flood just experienced in Iowa. Iowa historian, George Mills, was cited in the Des Moines Register, July 15, 1993, as saying that according to unofficial reports, Des Moines received 74.5 inches of rainfall in the first six months in 1851, which is more than TWICE as much rainfall as fell in the first six months of 1993.)

Red Rock never recovered from the unexpected blow Nature dealt it in the year 1851, just seven years after the first settlers had arrived, and with boundless enthusiasm and hope had envisioned a future full of promise. They believed that no location along the river was as fortuitous as theirs. The *Oskaloosa Herald* of June, 1851, describes the event which changed the course of their history forever.

“The Des Moines River felt the full effect of the great flood of 1851. Farms have been cleared of fences, growing crops, houses, and everything of a movable nature. The river was never known to be so high before. A vast amount of grain in the cribs has been swept away. The inhabitants on the river bottoms have been compelled to desert their homes and flee to the bluffs for refuge. A number of dwellings were carried entirely away. This flood has not only destroyed the present crops but has taken away the old crops that were stored for the present season. Eddyville, Ottumwa, Red Rock, and the eastern part of Fort Des Moines are nearly submerged by the overflowing river.”

On June 2, 1851, in Red Rock the rains had come in such vast quantities and so continuously that soon the creeks and the river itself were out of their banks. Though it had been raining for some time and the water was high, few expected the overflow that took place during the night, and the people were unaware of it until the sound of rushing water alerted them. Next, they noted

water seeping into the lower floors of their homes, growing deeper and deeper until near panic took over.

There were a few log boats owned by those who lived directly on the banks of the river. These were the only means of rescue. All domestic animals had to swim, sometimes for miles, to safety. Many of the animals perished. The Des Moines River soon covered the land from bluff to bluff, driving everybody to the hills. Here people camped without sufficient clothing or bedding or even food. There was no place to go. After a week, the waters receded, and people returned to what was left of their homes and started to clean out the heavy mud deposits.

Hardly had they gotten settled once more until the second flood swept down on them—much worse than the former one. Again they fled to the bluffs. This time they had to remain several weeks before the waters went down. When they returned home this second time, they found the destruction and desolation appalling. Furthermore, not a water mill on any of the streams could turn a wheel all summer, and there was a sad lack of bread that year.

The Red Rockers had been caught completely by surprise. They saw a side of their fair town they had never seen before or ever expected to see. Presumably, according to some historians, it had never happened before—the Indians said it never had. White man's cultivation of the land and cutting down of many of the trees along the banks of the river had exposed Red Rock's "fatal flaw." Red Rock's site was too low. Yet, the lesson that it was too low was not entirely comprehended. When the fearful flood of 1903 struck Red Rock, people were not prepared—they did not act quickly enough to protect their holdings in the best way possible. For them the flood of 1851 had been a "one shot" thing.

The damage wrought by the flood of 1851 was irreparable to the village of Red Rock. Its reputation as a safe and therefore suitable place of business was shattered. Who would want to purchase land or set up a business in a place so vulnerable to flooding? All hope of becoming the Capital of Iowa, a lively hope up to then, was swept away by the flood.

In general, the population stayed on, optimistic for the future. There were those, however, who did size up the situation correctly and decided to seek another place to live. As already noted, Reuben and Warren Mathews, for example, and others left the next spring for California to look for gold. Their departure was a sad loss for Red Rock.

June 1851, was the turning point for Red Rock. Growth and progress preceded this date; stagnation and slow decline followed until the end of the century. During the 20th century, a rapid decline took place.

Other Major Floods

The fact was that Red Rock's site, which its founders had thought was so ideal for trade and commerce, was a poor one. It was too low to protect the land from the mighty river when it went on a rampage. Furthermore, Red Rock

was "boxed in" by the high bluffs which tended to contain the waters when they flooded the land.

The 1851 flood caused great suffering and loss and was similar to other disappointments which Red Rock was to have in the future. Years of other major floods in Red Rock were 1903, 1947, and 1954. Just mention any one of these years to someone who had once lived in Red Rock and he/she could tell many stories of how disastrous the flood of that year had been. Lesser flooding occurred every few years, and each time the consequences were serious.

The Flood of 1903

The June 5, 1903, headline of the *Knoxville Journal* describes the flood of that year—FLOOD OF 1903 WAS THE HIGHEST OF ALL TIME: WABASH, ROCK ISLAND, AND BURLINGTON BRIDGES SWEEPED OUT. NO TRAINS HERE FOR TEN DAYS. Excerpts from the accompanying news story include:

"A six-room story and a half house on the Elbert farm south of Dunreath floated away and has not yet been discovered. . . Up to Saturday noon the river had fallen four feet, eight inches at Red Rock, and the water was still running over the telephone wires which cross the bottomland north of E. B. Ruckman's place. . . The county bridges between Knoxville and Pella and at Red Rock were covered with livestock which had taken refuge there. One farmer unable to drive his hogs onto the bridge took a load of corn on the bridge and the critters just naturally followed."

The floods of 1851 and 1903 have become legends deeply engraved in the minds of Red Rockers. Man was almost a helpless pawn in the face of demonic natural forces. Through all of Red Rock's history, floods threatened to destroy man's hopes and his efforts in building up a good way of life for himself. The "big" floods of 1947 and 1954 were slightly less fearful because of technology which could help people escape from the area during the high water periods. They did, however, cause untold loss of crops and property.

Transportation Problems

The Steamboats Come

Though the period of steamboating on the river was of rather short duration—1851 and 1862 are considered as the time boundaries for the greatest development of trade by water—it remains in people's minds as a romantic era in history, one marked with renewed hope for the future.

Before 1851 only small boats, keel boats, for example, had plied the river and they continued to do so in the period following the steamboat era. The high waters after the flood of 1851 made the river deep enough for steamboats! They were mostly of the stern wheel class, driven by old fashioned high pressure engines. Wood was used for generating steam. Their loud puffing noise stirred

up commotion all along the way, as people lined the banks to see these big boats loaded with all kinds of goods and passengers. People came to know them by name—the Sangamon, the Skipper, the Alice, the Ad Hine, the Clara Hine, the Des Moines Valley.

One of the problems in early navigation was the trash thrown or washed into the river; another was the farmers' small dams; and another was the tree trunks and other obstructions in the Des Moines River which reached such proportions that except during flood time, it was difficult for river boats to navigate the river. As early as 1855, attempts were being made to have the river cleaned out and perhaps dredged.

The steamboats ran for many weeks—from June to August in 1851. Hardly a day passed but a steamboat wended its way past Red Rock. Perhaps its destination was Des Moines, and when the water was deepest, it might go as far as Fort Dodge.

Unfortunately, those steamboats stopped at Red Rock only a few times. Better landing places with bigger bends in the river for protection for the ships from strong winds could be found at Bellefontaine and Coalport, both downriver, and even at Ora Dell (also known as Pinchey) upriver. These places became regular steamboat stops and they became the distribution points for goods carried by the steamboats. Another of Red Rock's hopes was dashed.

The steamboat period was not destined to last. During the Civil War, the steamboats were called to the Mississippi River to carry troops and supplies, and after that, the railroads came. Steamboating on the Des Moines River ended in the 1860s.

The Railroads

If the commercial establishments in Red Rock were to prosper, they had to have good transportation facilities. Also, the farmers of the area needed a means to ship out their livestock and to ship in machinery and feed.

After the Civil War when railroads were being laid across Iowa, excitement and expectations ran high in Red Rock that the "Iron Horse" would be routed through their town.

Red Rockers were to be twice disillusioned. The Rock Island Railroad which made plans to build a line through the Des Moines River Valley from Keokuk to Des Moines was routed six miles north of Red Rock, and at that site the town of Otley was founded. It became evident that a location on the river was not considered as important as Red Rockers had assumed it was. It became evident, too, that politics, or so Red Rockers thought, had played a part in deciding the location of the railroad line. The disappointment was so great that several citizens and several businesses moved to the new town. Harp's Store, Red Rock's largest business establishment, was moved bodily to Otley.

Red Rock was to be disillusioned a second time. The mighty Wabash was coming through with a line extending from St. Louis to Des Moines! Motiva-

tion for a line through this area was to tap the rich coal deposits of the county. The tracks were to parallel the river. In Marion County, the Wabash laid tracks through Tracy and Harvey, and Amsterdam (Howell), and at the location where Fifield was shortly to become a town, all right along the river. Certainly, Red Rock would be next.

Why a site on the river just one mile short of Red Rock was chosen instead of Red Rock is not clearly known. It was said that Red Rock people did not offer enough incentives (probably in bribes) or make strong enough arguments to get the railroad. It seems likely that the real reason was that the Red Rock site was just too low and danger of flooding too great.

Whatever the reasons, the Wabash built a depot and platted the town of Cordova one mile short of Red Rock. As Cordovans were to exult through the years, "Red Rock has the reputation, but Cordova has the railroad!"

Three or four miles west from Red Rock, Dunreath, a coal mining area, acquired a depot. It became a major coal shipping and railroad town. The Wabash railroad was Dunreath's lifeline; and Dunreath was very important to the Wabash.

Cordova flourished and Red Rock languished. But, actually, Cordova never did become large enough to be able to maintain a school or a church. Through the years, Cordovans depended on Red Rock for those services. They were close enough to be able to walk the distance between the towns. Cordova had the stockyards and the shipping facilities which Red Rock envied, and on which it had to depend. The two towns were so near to each other and so dependent on each other that strong relationships developed and boundaries between them became a bit blurred—they almost merged. They became sister towns. Each, however, retained a sense of its own identity.

Though it helped to have a rail depot only one mile away, Red Rock wondered now whether they had any chance of achieving the once hoped for power and success. But in the early 1890s a breakthrough in the dark clouds appeared for Red Rock. The Wabash, in an effort to generate as much business for itself as possible, built some spurs to big farms in the area and then, good news for Red Rock, a spur to the Red Rock bluffs. Red Rockers would be able to exploit the wealth of their red sandstone.

Quarrying the Red Sandstone

Red Rockers knew that their red rock deposits were unique in color—for the most part, an unusually bright, brick red. Various attempts had been made to quarry this rock and send it on small boats to Des Moines where it was used for building houses. E. W. Starr of Red Rock had operated the quarry from 1862 to 1883. He leased it to James Steward & Company of St. Louis who operated it seven years, but then they let it lie unworked for some time.

Next, the Wabash became interested. Following the installation of the

Wabash Spur line from Cordova to Red Rock, this item appeared in the *Knoxville Journal*, August, 10, 1895:

“A corporation with \$100,000 capital stock has been organized to develop the quarry. They have 20 workmen and within a month this force will be increased to 50.”

To acquaint the public with this enterprise, Company President Huttenocher invited a number of Knoxville prominent citizens and *Knoxville Journal* personnel to visit the quarries. The *Knoxville Journal* of August 10, 1895, reported:

“It was a gay ride on a beautiful day and crops were fine and abundant. Arriving at the quarry, we distributed our party around the hills and looked over the quarry, the machinery, office, engine room, blacksmith and tool departments, and gang saw and channel cutters. In places this rock had been taken out by the cutter, and sledge hammer and wedge.

“Ordinarily it is cut in cubes 5 to 6 feet each way, then slid down the hill to the twenty-four gang saws where it is cut to whatever size is desired.”

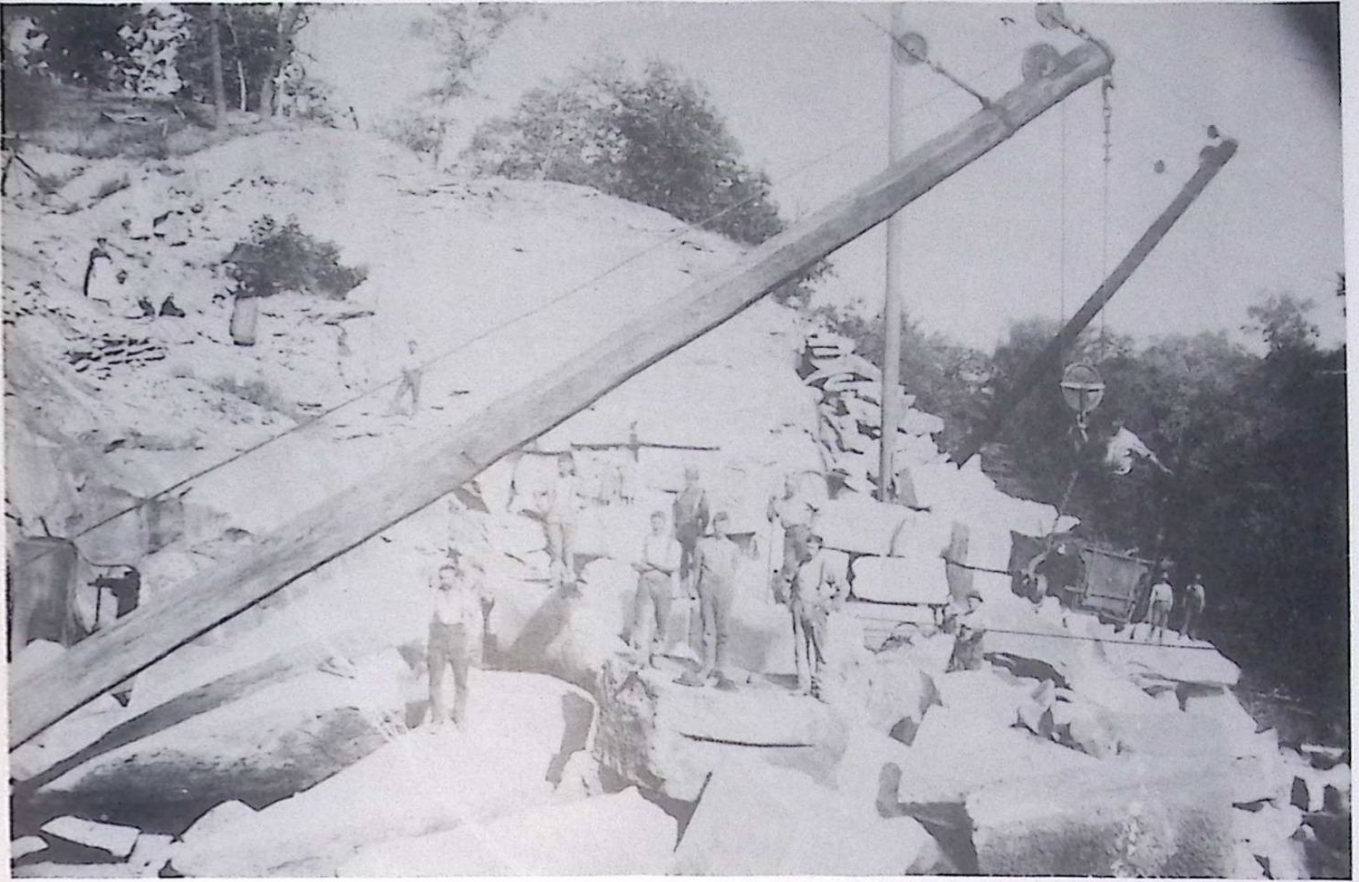
The account of the visit to the quarry continues,

“We set about to look at the uses to which the stone have been put and how they stood the wear. There is a bridge over Coal Creek just below Red Rock, the piers of which were built out of this stone in 1866. They are as perfect today as when they were put in and show that action of frost and water have no effect upon it. Mr. M. C. Gebhardt built himself a house in Otley using Red Rock stone that had been blocked out by Mr. E.W. Starr, Red Rock's oldest citizen, with a pick and some other rough tools. The foundation is still good. . . .The old arsenal building in Des Moines was made of this stone long ago.”

Under this new company's management, business boomed, 70 workers were added, and the picture seemed bright. But not for long. The market for the red rock fell when it became apparent that the stone was not as satisfactory as first thought. Customers said it was too soft, that it absorbed dirt, especially city smoke and pollution, and could not easily be cleaned. In a few years, the company abandoned the venture. Sadly, it was another example of boom and bust in Red Rock. The Red Rock bluffs were beautiful spots for enjoying nature and for picnics but were never again considered of economic value.

The quarry closed forever, the railroad spur was removed, the many extra workers dispersed quickly, and those that stayed had no jobs.

One would think that in view of all the disappointments the Red Rockers suffered, especially due to their periodic disastrous flooding, that they would have said, “This is enough! We're leaving this place!” This did happen in several instances. But they had a response to all their tough times. They said, “Red Rock against the world!” which meant that no matter what, they were remain-



Sybil Donahue

Quarrying seemed to have a bright future in the 1890s, but hopes were dashed when the rock was judged unacceptable for building purposes.

ing loyal to their beloved village. Time and time again, they came back after a flood and cleaned and repaired their properties and took their losses. Red Rock was their town!

The Red Rock House in Red Rock

For many years, there was one building in Red Rock made of this stone. It was called the Red Rock House or just the Rock House. After the original owner vacated the house, it was leased by a long succession of renters. Evidently, there was some reason why no one lived in it very long. Dale Bumgardner said his family had lived in it for a time, and that despite its walls of more than a foot in thickness, it was unbearably cold in the winter and unbearably hot in the summer. He attributed this condition to the fact that the rock was so porous that it absorbed a great deal of water. The temperature that one feels is affected adversely by the amount of humidity in the air, and this may be another reason for the unsuitability of the red sandstone for building purposes.

However, the house did look imposing and distinctive and it was the pride and symbol of Red Rock. When it had to be torn down for the Red Rock Project, it was visited by many who came to Red Rock to pick up a stone as a souvenir.



Harriet Heusinkveld

Red Rock House, only house in Red Rock made of the native sandstone.

Chapter 8

RED ROCK IN THE CIVIL WAR

“We shall meet, but we shall miss him, There will be one vacant chair. We shall linger to caress him, When we breathe our evening prayer.”

—Civil War song, “The Vacant Chair.”

Pre-War Activities

Slavery was a hot issue in the Red Rock area long before the war broke out. It was the chief topic of conversation wherever people met. George Jewett of Red Rock wrote of the town's involvement, “An exciting incident in old Red Rock was the winter that John Brown, the ardent abolitionist, spent there. He and my grandfather Osee Mathews, would sit and talk for hours, and I stood by and listened. (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept. 25, 1930, Sec. 10, 8)

John Brown had a religious fervor for abolishing slavery amounting almost to fanaticism, and he spoke in the Knoxville area, too, trying to get people to endorse his cause. He appeared almost incognito because he had killed five proslavery men in Kansas, which was likely why he stayed in the quiet little town of Red Rock that winter. The Osee Mathews family were in agreement with his views. Later (1859) Brown was hanged in Charleston, S.C., and the sincerity of his calm defense led many to regard him as a martyr. The hymn, “John Brown's Body,” applauds his stand.

George Jewett referring to John Brown's visit said, “A litte later this bore fruit. I was working on Uncle George Reynolds' farm (Caroline Mathews' husband) when one of the leading Abolitionists came up to Uncle George and told him it was his night to drive a team in the Underground Railway. He said he was not feeling well and for them to get someone else. I spoke up and said, “Uncle George, let me go.” He studied me for a moment and said, “All right,” so I drove a team and wagon on the Underground Railway with slaves.”

“The slaves were brought in at break of day and concealed in the barn or basement until darkness came, when they were smuggled on to the next station which was the home of John Clements of Knoxville.” (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept. 25, 1930, Sec. 10, 8)

Also from the pen of George Jewett, "When I was a student at Central College, our debate team tackled such issues as "Shall Slavery be Extended to the Territories?" "Shall Kansas be a Free State?" "Was the Dred Scott Decision Just?" The students became so involved in the issues facing our country that when Lincoln's call came for volunteers to come to the aid of our country, every able bodied male, 122 of them out of this little school, answered the call. Sadly, 26 of them never came back." (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept. 25, 1930, Sec. 10, 6).

The scene at Central College was described by one of the professors:

"As soon as the war broke out, the Big Bell in the College tower rang out with a call for volunteers, loud and long. For hours it tolled, pealing forth in its clear strong tones the cry of a nation in distress. One by one, the college boys began to enlist. Among the first to volunteer were the Ruckman boys, John and Joe, and Homer Jewett from Red Rock."



Central College photos

Homer Jewett, John Ruckman, and Joe Ruckman leave Central College for the Civil War.

"A room in the College building was set apart for them, and they commenced to drill and prepare for actual service. On the 21st of May the first enlistment of soldiers went to Knoxville to join their company. The girls stood on the College steps and waved a tearful goodbye to them as they marched away in martial glory." (Clarkson, 1899, 111-112)

In May, 1861, several companies of soldiers were recruited at Knoxville, Iowa, one of which was to become the most heroic in Iowa—the Third Iowa Infantry, Company B. Several Red Rock young men, John and Joe Ruckman and Homer Jewett among them, were assigned to this regiment. The Company Captain was William Stone of Knoxville, who later was to become the Governor of Iowa. The Third was the only Union regiment in the whole volunteer army in the

Civil War that literally fought itself out of existence. The regiment became so decimated that finally it merged with the Iowa Second Infantry.

A Poorly Organized War

The account of the part played by Third Infantry, Company B, as told by Robert I. Garden, member of this company, in his *History of Scott Township, Mahaska County, Iowa*, 1907, gives real insight as to how it was to fight in the Civil War, and what an amateur undertaking it really was. Excerpts of his war reminiscences follow:

“To those who are yet living, still lingers in pleasant memory the hospitality so generously shown by the loyal citizens of Knoxville, during our recruitment days, especially by her good, loyal brave women, who during our short stay among them cut and made for each member of the Company a red flannel shirt, also furnishing each one with a glazed cap, which we were proud of, as these uniforms distinguished us from the civilians.

“During the last days of May, Company B received orders to repair to Keokuk. When the time arrived for our departure, the good citizens of Knoxville voluntarily furnished us enough teams to transport us by wagon to Eddyville, which was then the terminus of the Des Moines Valley Railroad, from where we would continue on to Keokuk by rail.

“As we would reach Bellefontaine (just east of Tracy) about noon of that day, the townspeople prepared for us a sumptuous dinner. They erected a long table on the village commons near the bank of the Des Moines River. The one hundred “Red Shirt” boys of Company B were honored by being seated first at the table, fifty at each side, opposite each other.

“After dinner, we spent a happy hour visiting with our friends. When the time had come for our departure, we bade them all good-bye. For many it was their last good-bye. Our hearts beat with patriotism for the enthusiasm displayed by the citizens as they lined up on the opposite shore of the Des Moines River, while we were being ferried over the stream, cheering us on by waving their adieus until we disappeared from their view in the heavy timber on the river bottom opposite Bellefontaine.

“In Keokuk we were mustered into the service of the United States on the 17th day of June, 1861. On the 24th day we received our first pay. It was a small sum for a month of service, less than seven dollars to each one. But it was highly appreciated as many of us had been out of money for some time.

“That same day we received our arms, but instead of the Springfield or Enfield rifle, of which we had so many dreams, we

were disappointed in finding a plain Springfield 1848 musket, the outdated musket used in the Mexican War.

“We did not realize how disadvantaged we were until later. Then we went to our tents, pitched on the banks of the majestic Father of Waters.

“Almost from the very outset, we were destined to receive our training in the face of the enemy.

“On July 5, our long-desired uniforms were issued to us. The quantity of rations which we drew was totally inadequate. Of un-substantials, such as salt, vinegar, soap, and candles, we had plenty, but of bread, the staff of life, each man received but three hard crackers a day. Of beans, each man got about a pint in eight days.

“By the fourth of August, we were to learn what it was to see the enemy and to be shot at by him. The battle of Blue Mills Landing was our first battle. Our regiment spent the day after the battle in taking care of the wounded and burying the dead in the public cemetery there, then of writing home the sad news to father or mother that their son had fallen in the battle. No one can imagine the emotions I felt when delegated to write of my dear friend, Jacob Moore, of Bellefontaine. He had received a shot in the abdomen on the first day of battle. He was placed on a hospital boat and sent with many others to Mound City, Illinois, where he died a few days thereafter. He was one of the best and noblest among us. . .

“In October, Colonel Schott managed to secure from a bank sufficient money to pay the enlisted men ten dollars each. . .

“On December 1, 1862, the writer (Robert Garden) was suddenly taken sick with erysipelas in the left arm, which caused my separation for a time from my Company and comrades. I was sent to the rear in an ambulance to the military hospital at Holly Springs, where I lay on an army cot suffering with a raging fever for the next eight or ten days, after which time I began to get better and soon thereafter became convalescent.

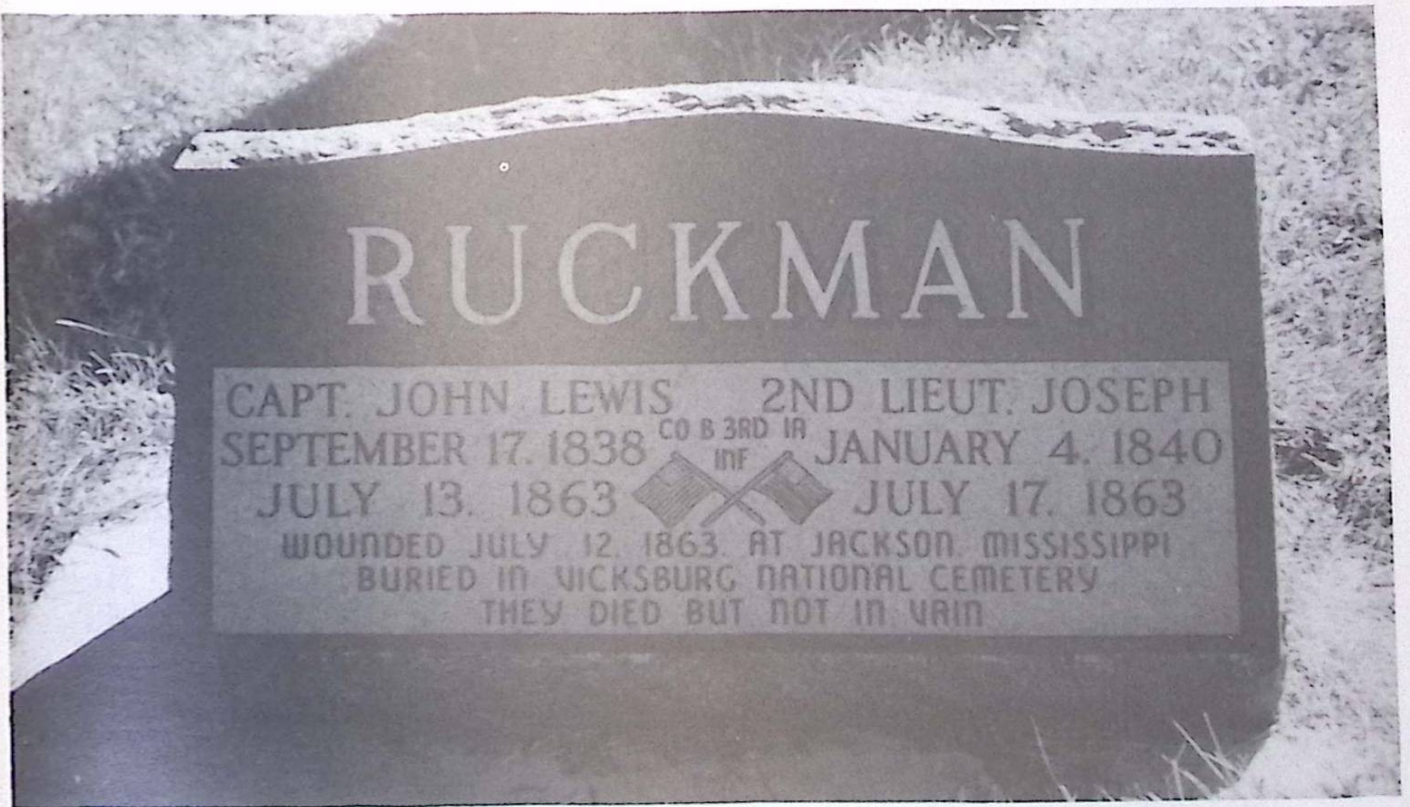
The Ruckman Sons Die

“At Jackson, Mississippi, July 1863, Company B lost every one of its officers. Among them were the two Ruckman brothers, Captain J. L. Ruckman and First Lieutenant Joseph Ruckman of Red Rock. When the sad news was conveyed by letter to that dear mother of the Ruckman brothers that both of her gallant sons had fallen on the field of battle, her grief was too great to bear. I was told that she jumped into the river, but was rescued by a kindly

bystander. She never fully recovered from her great sorrow and died of a broken heart.” (Garden, 1907, 1-4)

The Ruckman bothers referred to by Robert Garden were, of course, the sons of Amos and Amanda Ruckman. It was ironic that the family had left the South to get away from the abhorrent institution of slavery. Even beyond irony, it was criminally disgraceful that the battle of Jackson was not a glorious battle but a massacre brought about by ill-will between two generals and conceived by one general to injure the reputaton of the other.

The Third Infantry, Company B, 145 in number, was ordered into an enemy ambush. They didn’t have a chance. Almost immediately, they ran into the roar of guns shot by a large number of the enemy, which resulted in almost the annihilation of the company. In the case of Captain John Ruckman, he was struck by an exploding shell, and the lower part of his abdomen torn away. When found he was trampling his own vitals under his feet. His body now lies in the National Cemetery at Vicksburg. The body of his brother Joseph was never found. In 1991, a memorial stone to the two Ruckman brothers was placed in the Ruckman Cemetery by their grand nephew, Duane Ruckman, of Monroe. The inscription, “Wounded July 12, 1863, at Jackson Mississippi. Buried in Vicksburg National Cemetery. They died but not in vain.” And on the back side of the gravestone, “Beloved sons of Amos and Amanda Ruckman.”



Harriet Heusinkveld

Memorial stone in Ruckman Cemetery for the Ruckman sons killed in the Civil War.

The story of the Ruckman brothers was not forgotten by his schoolmates. One, David Ryan, of Newton, wrote this tender letter to one of his old Central College teachers.

"You will forgive me if I speak of my special friend, Joe Ruckman. Occasionally I have gone with him to his home. The Ruckman family consisted of the father and mother (Amos and Amanda) and three sons—of whom Joe was the youngest. The father was a tall, athletic rosy-cheeked man. The mother was a short, sprightly and active woman with exceedingly bright eyes; an encyclopedia on history and politics. Her conversation was to me most delightful. She prepared the meals at an open fire and the baking was in the "Dutch oven" made hot by standing in front of the fire and placing coals on the lid. As she busied herself about the household duties, occasionally passing and repassing Joe, she would stroke his head or pat his cheek gently, and it seemed each time she did anything of this sort, Joe would look at me shyly and inquiringly.

"In 1861, when my command was on its way to Vicksburg, we passed the city of Memphis where Joe and his command were stationed, and we were fortunate to see him there as we passed. At our parting, with a tear in his eye, he expressed the hope that we might pass safely through the dangers before us.

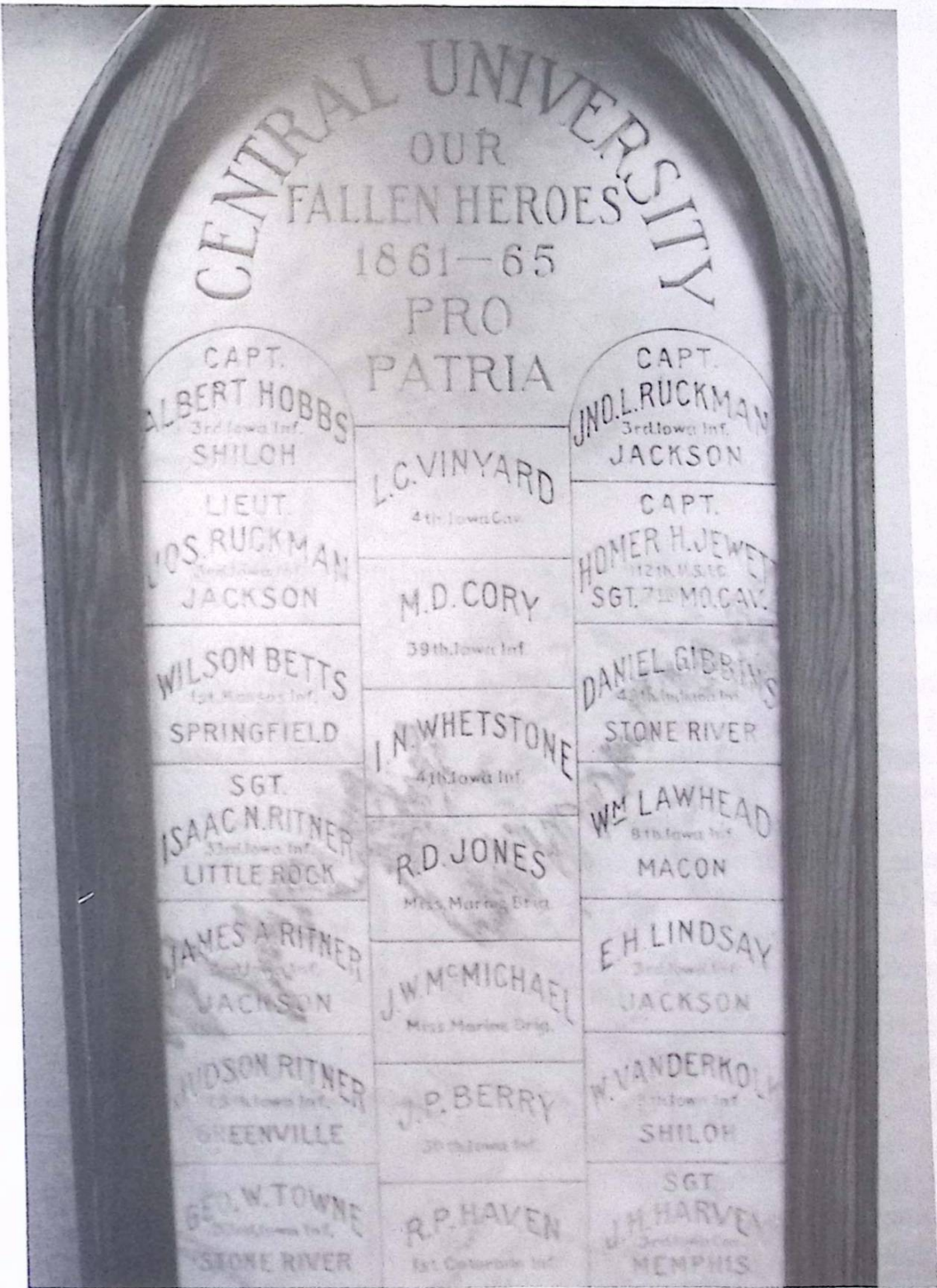
"And so we parted. A little later we were in the same line of battle at Jackson, Mississippi. Joe's brigade by some error was ordered to charge the enemy's works. Both Joe and his brother John were upon the enemy's ramparts when Joe fell inside the works, mortally wounded. John lived only long enough to be taken from the field. Shortly afterwards the news came to me that both the Ruckman boys had been killed. When the sad news reached their mother, she lost her reason. I have since been in that home. To me it speaks of war's desolation as no other picture I can recall. Your friend, David Ryan." (Clarkson, 1899, 151-153)

Other Red Rock War Casualties

Another Red Rock hero, casualty of the Civil War, was Homer Jewett, son of George and Patti Mathews Jewett, who mysteriously disappeared. Homer was a captain in the 7th Missouri Cavalry. He, like the Ruckmans, was a Central College student at the time he enlisted. It was written of him,

"The nature of Homer Jewett's fate is unknown. He worked in the Secret Service. Having let his hair grow long, with his dark, handsome face he readily passed for a Southerner. Going through the war with credit, he entered upon the business of buying and shipping cotton. Suddenly letters from him ceased coming, and from that time to this, the fate of brave Homer Jewett has been one of the mysteries no one seems able to fathom. His aged mother is yet living, and will never cease to hope for tidings of him." (Clarkson, 1899, 116)

The names of John and Joseph Ruckman are inscribed on a marble plaque installed in Central Hall at Central College honoring “Our Fallen Heroes.” The plaque was donated by Homer Jewett’s brother, George Anson Jewett, Class of 1862. *(This plaque is identical to and replaced one installed in the College immediately after the War. The original was destroyed in a fire in 1922)*



Kevin Kool

Marble memorial plaque in Central Hall, honoring Central students killed in the Civil War. Three of the four officers who died are from Red Rock: Lieut. Jos. Ruckman, Capt. Jno. L. Ruckman, and Capt. Homer Jewett.

John W. Alley of Red Rock was wounded in the War and disabled for life. He lived in Red Rock with his wife and family and operated a store for a time.



Maxine Alley

Mr. and Mrs. John W. Alley. John was disabled in the Civil War. They are the parents of Plato and Bill Alley.

Charity Haynes, granddaughter of the Jacob Haynes family and niece of school teacher Isabell Haynes McCollum who died in the horseback accident, went south to find Oliver Drake, her soldier husband who had been wounded. Her parents tried to dissuade her because she was pregnant and because of the uncertainty and difficulty of the undertaking. Ironically, she missed him as he was traveling north to see her. Thus he went back to duty without seeing her. On Charity's return, she died in childbirth because of her exhausted condition, and her baby died also. Nor was her husband ever heard of again. (*Pleasantville, Past and Present*, 1976, 119)

Doubtless, there were other cases of tragedy for which we have no information. The sufferings of the Civil War lasted long after the war was over.

A Red Rock soldier who returned safely was John H. Kellenberger, a Central College student who had enlisted in November, 1861, and was also in the fateful Third Iowa Infantry, Company B. He was wounded in the battle of Shiloh (Tennessee) in 1862 and discharged due to his gun wounds. In 1863 he re-enlisted in Company I of the Iowa Cavalry, and made a First Lieutenant. When he was discharged in 1866, he went into farming.

In his later years, Kellenberger gave several mementos of his war days to the Pella Historical Museum, where they are on display—a piece of hard tack, the bullet that had entered his shoulder and was extracted (seven men holding him while the surgeon probed for the bullet), a piece of the mourning cape

he wore at the time of Lincoln's assassination, and the light saber he used while an officer in the army, which was given to him when he mustered out in 1866 at Little Rock, Arkansas, by Captain J. Lambert.

Whether they died or whether they lived to return from the Civil War, these soldiers of so long ago conducted themselves nobly in this war which was so amateurish, so brutal, so mismanaged at times, and which was fought under such miserable, body-punishing circumstances. Their cause of abolishing slavery and reuniting the Union was a glorious one.

Chapter 9

POST CIVIL WAR BITTERNESS AND UNREST

Battles on the Home Front

At home, the Civil War evoked conflicting hot emotions. Anyone suspected of dodging the draft was regarded with great scorn. An 1865 item in the *Knoxville Journal* reports. "About 50 persons in all left Pella for Oregon on Monday of last week, and an equal number are now preparing to leave. Where they intend to go we are not able to say, but we presume any place where the draft will not reach them. Those leaving are Hollanders of that class who vote to surrender to the rebels. We can spare them quite well, and no tears are shed by the Union at their departure." (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept. 25, 1930, Sec 3, p. 5)

The churches entered the struggle, too. "The Rev. Claiborne Hall, an early pastor in Red Rock, left to serve the Church of Christ Church in Knoxville in 1854. He was a "rebel" at heart and declared from the pulpit, "If I were to shoot, I would shoot toward the North quicker than toward the South,"—a statement that caused him to lose his position and caused the church to disband, not to reopen until 1870. Hall left Iowa in 1864 for Illinois.

Another example of church involvement in the fray was one told of a prayer meeting in 1863 in which a venerable old gentleman offered prayers that would grant the privilege without crime attached to shoot down all hypocrites and Northern men that sympathized with the Southern Confederacy and that the Lord would send a distressing plague upon the farmers of the South.

Not all the angry ones asked God to punish those who sympathized with the Southern cause. They meted out the punishments themselves as evidenced in the following items from the *Knoxville Journal*, "Sam Shirey, a Copperhead, living on the road leading from Pleasantville to Red Rock, was hanged on Sunday night by the exasperated loyal citizens of that neighborhood because he expressed joy over the assassination of President Lincoln. Verily it is a hard road for traitors and northern Copperheads to travel in these times." (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept 5, 1930, Sec.5, p. 5) "*Copperhead*," a poisonous reptile, was an insulting term for Northerners who were sympathetic to the South.

Loyalty to the cause of the Civil War often took precedence over justice. Another victim of the angry feelings generated on both sides of the issue was a Red Rock shoemaker by the name of Cole. His fellow townsman, William Bass, who had been in the Union Army, was going around with an Oath of Allegiance to the Union paper which he was asking everyone to sign. Bass entered a saloon where Cole was sitting at the counter and thrust the paper towards him. Cole refused to sign. Bass pulled out his revolver, and Cole started towards him with a knife. Bass fired and hit Cole near the heart. Cole died of the wound a few weeks later. Bass was tried and acquitted. Likely, no judge would have dared to convict Bass because his stand was the popular one. (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept 25, 1930, Sec. 8, p. 2)

An item which appeared in the *Knoxville Journal* several years later, "A great number of people living will remember the notorious William Bass of Red Rock. He was a bold, bad man and got into lots of trouble." The newspaper had mentioned something about one of his escapades, so one day Bass came into the office while under the influence of liquor and said he was going to "clean out the office." A. F. Sperry, the editor, was sitting at his desk in the front room. Bass staggered in and asked if he were the editor. Sperry said that he was, and Bass replied, "My name is Bass, and I'm from Red Rock." Sperry ducked out of the room, ran through the composing room, out the back door, and if he were alive today, I think he would be running yet. Bass left the office and made no more trouble. (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept. 25, 1930, Sec. 1, p. 6)

To add to the horror of the Cole murder, Bob Cole, son of the man Bass murdered, was also killed in Red Rock as he and a Union soldier, Dick Gray, were engaged in a bitter argument in the James Johnson drug store. Suddenly Gray plunged a knife into Cole and turned it around. An eye witness said, "I can still hear that sound. it sounded like the tearing of cloth." Cole immediately cried out, "He killed me," but he managed to walk out of the store to a hitching post where he leaned over, his head in his arms. Suddenly he gushed forth more than a quart of blood and was dead. Meanwhile Gray coolly took the ferry over the river and returned to Knoxville to his wife. He was brought to trial for the murder but was acquitted. (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept 25, 1930, Sec. 8, p. 2)

The Civil War had resulted in bitter feuds, even strife among families who took different stances on the subject of the rightness of the war that had been fought.

Like all wars, the Civil War resulted in personal griefs that could never be healed. On February 17, 1870, Amos Ruckman and W. H. Summer of Union Township started for Mississippi on a fruitless search for the remains of the two Ruckman sons, Captain John L. Ruckman and Lieut. Joseph Ruckman of Company B, Third Iowa Infantry, who had lost their lives in the battle of Jackson, Mississippi. The family and the community remember the great loss of the Ruckman brothers even to the present time. (*A great-great niece of the Ruckmans, Susan Ruckman Eggers of Colfax, plans an expedition to Mississippi in the fall of 1993, to search for the grave of Joe Ruckman.*)

Polarization of Political Parties

After the Civil War, feelings became more virulent concerning which political party, Republican or Democratic, a person endorsed. Feelings ran so high that family splits occurred as a result of opposing political loyalties. In the minds of many, party affiliation was more indicative of a person's true character than his/her church affiliation.

One interviewee, Mrs. Blanche Templeton, reported that the early histories of Marion County reflected the author's bias. Glaring omissions, even mention of personages who had been influential in the area, occurred because said person did not belong to the "right" party. (Checking into the matter, the writer can corroborate this statement). Furthermore, the amount of space and adulation in an obituary depended on whether the deceased's party was or was not the same as that of the newspaper editor's. An obituary always mentioned the deceased's political affiliation, sometimes his church affiliation.

The Republicans felt that their foremost issue was their loyalty to the cause of the Civil War. The Democrats would not concede, however, that they differed on this issue. Lincoln's "government of the people, by the people, and for the people," they said, was basic to their own concept of democracy in government.

Of political importance was the farm issue. Though the farmer was overwhelmingly predominant numerically, he was not satisfied that he was getting a fair share in the good living the country as a whole was experiencing.

In 1873, farmers were joining the Grange, an organization which started in Illinois as a social and fraternal brotherhood among farmers, but later became a protest group as well.

A mass meeting of Grangers and laborers was held at the Knoxville Court house in March, 1873, filling the hall almost to overcrowding. Captain Blaine, farmer-schoolteacher from Red Rock presided. Eliphalet (Bent) Ruckman and Robert Crozier, Red Rock farmers, among others, were appointed to the Committee on Resolutions. Although the Grange was not designed as a political organization, Captain Blaine addressed the meeting at length, saying that the object of the meeting was to devise means to advance the interests of farmers. (March 6, 1873, *Knoxville Journal*).

At a June 14 meeting in the Courthouse, the newspaper reported that it was the largest number ever assembled in Marion County. Mention was made of several prominent republicans taking part, namely Governor William Stone of Knoxville and E. B. Ruckman of Red Rock. Captain Blaine and Robert Crozier were among the half dozen prominent Democrats mentioned. The convention adopted resolutions related to anti-monopoly, and denunciation of railroad rates and services. It condemned the political corruption of the old parties. (June 19, 1873, *Knoxville Journal*)

Later in the summer of 1873, the Grangers drew up a county ticket, and E. B. Ruckman was nominated County Coroner and Robert Crozier, Surveyor.

The Democratic Convention, meeting soon thereafter, decided not to place a ticket in the field but to unite with the Grangers in support of their ticket. In October, the entire Grange ticket was swept into office. A victory for the Democrats. (Aug. 7, Sept. 11, Oct. 16, 1873, issues of *Knoxville Journal*.)

Before too many years, the Grange faded out of existence, and the two mainline parties continued to battle in the elections. The farm problem was not satisfactorily settled. Farmers suffered with the rest of the nation upon the advent of the the Panic or Depression of 1873. William Jackson (Jack) Mikesell (as related earlier) was one of the restless ones who moved out of Red Rock to seek a better fortune in Kansas.

The Notorious Williams Brothers

The brawls and killings that had marked Red Rock during its trading posts days continued for some years. It was almost as if it were a part of the culture, or at least a subculture. Not only were there passionate feelings for or against the Civil War, but fights over fence boundaries, marital mixups, and arguments leading to fights.

Many took the law in their own hands. It was swifter that way. If the neighbors considered the killings justified, they refused to file charges against the guilty party. Often the criminals were regarded as heroes and were almost always acquitted.

Most notorious of the bad guys were the Williams brothers, Horry and Marvin of Red Rock. Horry was involved in so many scrapes and was so good at eluding the officers that he became sort of a folk hero. On September 15, 1873, Horry Williams killed William Keaton two miles west of Red Rock following an argument concerning Keaton's wife. Williams was pursued and arrested and following the trial, he was sentenced to 20 years imprisonment, but before being taken to Fort Madison, he escaped from the officers, only to be recaptured.

Somehow, he did not serve his sentence, because we hear of him again in 1876, where on October 11 he and two other men robbed the Knoxville Courthouse of about \$12,000—some say \$40,000. In either case, an immense sum for that time. After an intense search Horry was apprehended in Deadwood, South Dakota, but he managed to escape from the officers' train bringing him back by jumping out the train window, while presumably going to the rest room, but he was recaptured and brought back to Knoxville where he was sentenced to a term in the penitentiary at Fort Madison.

From the *Knoxville Journal*, December 27, 1882, "Horry Williams has been paroled from the State Penitentiary by Governor Sherman. He has spent 6 years at Fort Madison. Over 600 Marion County citizens, including the judge who sentenced him, the attorneys who prosecuted the case, and all but one of the jurymen who rendered the verdict united in petitioning the Governor for Williams' release."

Horry was good newspaper material as indicated by this item in the *Knoxville Journal*, November 7, 1883, "Horry Williams takes the cake in shooting wild turkeys, having brought down fifteen at one shot near Red Rock one day last week."

Public attitude concerning Horry Williams is indicated in an old timer's reminscences, "My youthful hero? Horry Williams of Red Rock. How we kids loved to gather out in the barn and act out his exploits, riding a broomstick horse at a furious pace and shooting dead the villains who opposed us. Or perhaps it would be a reenactment of the robbing of the Treasury, when we bound one of our number to a chair and held our wooden knives to his throat until he delivered up the keys to the safe. One boy in playing the part of the guard was one day obstinate in handing over the keys, and one of us gave him such a vicious jab in the belly that he brought forth both blood and tears." (*Knoxville Journal*, Jub. Ed., Sept. 25, 1930, Sec. 3, p. 1).

Marv Williams was not as fortunate as his brother Horry. On August 12, 1877, Marv Williams and T. R. Buttrey had a dispute over Williams' status in the saloon owned by Buttrey. Williams claimed he was a full partner in the saloon, while Buttrey said he was but a helper. They met on a Sunday with revolvers, and Buttrey got in the first shot and Marv Williams was killed immediately. It was said to be the tenth murder in Red Rock.

Wyatt Earp in Red Rock

Through the years, Red Rock was known as an exciting place to live. One of those attracted was 18-year old Wyatt Earp who went to live in Red Rock in 1864. He was tired of hoeing potatoes at home in Pella. He ran away from home to seek adventure in Red Rock. He found what he was looking for, but to his regret he fell in with a gang of outlaws who manhandled him. He left Red Rock for the West in fear and haste when the gang committed a murder. Later he became the gunman and lawman known in Western history and fiction.

The Spanish American War

By 1898, the United States was again at war, the Spanish American War, where the issues were not as well understood as those of the Civil War, and patriotism was not at such a high level. The location of the Philippines, where Marion County soldiers went to fight, was not known, and even men in high positions in Government had to hustle to their maps to find out where it was and what islands it included.

One of the many men from this area who participated in this war was Zacheus Ruckman, youngest son of Eliphalet and Charity Ruckman. He joined with company D of the Iowa National Guard in Knoxville, which was ordered to the Philippines on February 18, 1899. The soldiers, 1,000 men strong, sailed from San Francisco on the transport *Pennsylvania*, a voyage of 92 days. One

can imagine what a heady experience it was for these young men to be on the Pacific Ocean, sailing for unknown lands. They had barely arrived in the Philippines before they were under fire.

Some of the their encounters with the enemy were mere skirmishes, one town being taken with only one machine gun. Nevertheless, they also saw hard service and they won renown.

This item appeared in the *Knoxville Journal*, November 11, 1899, "Company D arrived home Monday at 1:30 a.m. About 120 people from Knoxville met the Company at Council Bluffs and made the homeward journey with them from that point. Sixty-eight men from this area had traveled 21,000 miles, engaged in more than a score of battles, slept in the rain, waded in mud up to their necks, lay in hospitals, went hungry, and yet every man returned alive. It is estimated that from 7,000 to 10,000 people participated in the reception for Company D."

Zacheus Ruckman went back to Red Rock where he went into farming. It must have been a great adjustment for him to return to the quiet life of the farm. The Government paid him a pension for the rest of his life.

The close of the Spanish American War marked as well the close of the 19th century. This century had not been an uneventful or quiet time. True, it was marked by people of criminal intentions, but more importantly by people of great worth who had carved out a town and its institutions as well as beautiful productive farmlands out of the wilderness.

PART II

Red Rock in the Twentieth Century

Chapter 10

RED ROCK COPES WITH THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Overview of the Early Decades of the 20th Century

Red Rockers must have looked forward to the twentieth century with great expectations, eager to accept the challenge of a new start. Fortunately for humankind, hope does spring eternal. Peace reigned again, following the Spanish American War, and the great sadness of the Civil War, now 35 years in the past, was becoming a dim memory. Though Red Rock in its 47 years of existence had lost population from its peak of more than 1,000 people, it still had about 700 people, a viable number for a village economy.

During the 19th century, their hopes with respect to a bonanza in quarrying had been dashed. Possessing one's own land, an almost Utopian idea to people coming from Europe, had not quite measured up to expectations. The farmer was beset with problems of overproduction, low prices, and increased foreign competition. Depressions plagued the farmer periodically. Red Rock's main function had always been to serve the farmer, and when the farmers suffered, so did the townspeople.

A cause for rejoicing was the bridge which had been constructed across the Des Moines River in 1897. Since its beginnings in 1843, Red Rock had only a ferry to make contact with the county seat and with those who lived south of the river. The bridge was a symbol of hope.

Fortunately, the years 1900-1914 proved to be good years for farmers nationally, therefore for Red Rock farmers, too. The agony of the devastating flood of 1903 (Chapter 7) was a setback and interruption to progress, but eventually people recovered from that disaster.

The years 1914-20 were an economic teeter-totter. During World War I, prices for farm products soared and optimism did too. Dizzied by the improved economy, farmers spent wildly for machinery and for additional land. When the War ended, the boom burst and farmers were holding high-priced land which they had mortgaged to the hilt, but prices for their produce had fallen. Many went bankrupt and lost their land. It was economic catastrophe. The bad times



Clyde Williams

Lucy Nichols (hands on the wheel) and friends. Lucy is the mother of Art Nichols and the grandmother of Clyde Williams. Automobiles were the marvel of the early twentieth century.

were climaxed with the Stock Market Crash of 1929, after which the nation was plunged into what came to be called the Great Depression. It dominated all facets of life during the '30s and early '40s.

Nature, too, turned her back on the farmers. During the 1930s, drought, plagues of insects, and blistering heat combined to cause complete crop failures. All workers had to take off several hours in the afternoon in order to survive the heat. Livestock died from the heat and lack of water. Agricultural prices were the lowest they had ever been.

Many lost their land to banks or insurance companies and became tenant farmers or laborers on other farmers' lands. Others moved into Red Rock and tried to find work, often impossible to obtain. At least two farmers in the surrounding area committed suicide in the '30s, and others took to heavy drinking.

Life was not as rosy or prosperous as the early pioneer had envisioned it would be. At times, hope gave way to despair. Yet, the majority had no thought of leaving Red Rock. It was the area where their families had lived for generations, and it was where they felt they belonged. They would wait out the bad times and keep trying.

If anyone had told the people of the Red Rock community in the beginning of the 1930s that their community would physically disappear in a matter of three decades, they would certainly have considered that prophecy with amusement.

Anyway, 30 years was a long time ahead. However, the clock did tick away, and eventually it did become apparent that their beloved, historic town, the community where their families had lived for generations, would soon become only a memory.

Today, those who lived there in those last decades have many beautiful and poignant memories of that time when the Depression, World War II, the everyday life in the town and farm, school and church activities, and all the events they had experienced together dominated their thinking.

Inasmuch as the life of a community at any given time is the sum total of its people and their talents and dreams and experiences, a look at the people and their "goings-on" and how they met their problems in Red Rock from 1930 to 1960 will be the subject of this chapter.

Red Rock in the Great Depression of the '30s

The Farmers

County plat books showing farm property owners at various times indicate startling changes of land ownership in the 1930s as compared to the preceding years. According to the 1917 plat book, the big owners north of the river were Reuben Core and John H. Templeton. South of the river they were the Ruckman, Teter, Crozier, Jones, Harp, and Carpenter families.

Twenty years later, 1937, the John H. and James Templeton and C.C. Core families still owned land north of the river, as did Cecil Reese, but a large part of the land was in the hands of Bankers' Trust Company. South of the river, most of the previous owners had been replaced by the Des Moines Joint Stock Land Bank, and the Commercial Mutual Life Insurance Company. These financial companies, in many cases, later sold the land back to the original farmers at reasonable prices.)

The farmers able to "hang on" were the fortunate ones, and it was often a matter of timing in the matter of acquiring and paying for the land that made the difference. The older farmers were more apt to have a little capital in the form of machinery and livestock, which they could turn over if necessary, but they were not forced into selling their land. A newcomer in buying land could hardly withstand the money crises connected with the financial crash of 1929.

The Templeton family was one of these fortunate ones who came through the Depression owning land. John H. Templeton had come to Iowa with his parents in 1855, when he was but six years old. After a year in Davenport, which was at that time the end of the railroad, the family moved westward into Marion County, acquiring a great deal of land in northern Red Rock Township around Dunreath.

In the 1920s, the family, like so many others, lost a great deal of that land, and they resettled near Red Rock and bought land there. This time, John H. Templeton was more successful, and he became one of the large landholders

in the county with 600 acres of land, just to the north of Red Rock town. He was a public minded person, who served as County Clerk of Courts, County Supervisor, and Justice of the Peace. On September 8, 1870, he married Sara Jane Crew, and they had six daughters and one son, most of whom lived in the Red Rock area until the end of their lives.



Blanche Templeton

Wedding picture, John H. and Sara Jane (Crew) Templeton. Married, Sept. 8, 1870.

When he died at the age of 83 in 1932, Templeton's obituary stated that "he had grown up in a new country, and that his passing marked the end of a wonderful generation of pioneers to whom we owe so many modern advantages such as public schools and good roads."

Through the years, John Templeton's descendants made significant contributions to Red Rock community life. They continued on in the farming tradition, becoming progressive farmers and livestock producers. They included Joe L. Templeton and wife Mary Elizabeth Jones, widow Alice Templeton Visser and her son John Martin Visser, Cecil and Elizabeth Templeton Reese, James Templeton and wife Blanche Karr, Hugh Templeton and wife Dorothy Core, and Dwight and Sarah Templeton Harvey.

Other "big" farmers who were survivors of the Depression and kept their land were the Cores, descendants of Reuben Core and his wife Catherine Johnson, daughter of the Red Rock's long time doctor, Peter M. Johnson. They had 460 acres of land lying between Red Rock and Cordova (located under the present-day, mile-long bridge on State Highway 14).



Blanche Templeton

John H. Templeton home about 1 mile north of Red Rock. Burned c. 1915 and replaced by the home pictured on page 123.



Dorothy Templeton

John Templeton and grandsons, C., 1919. Back row, standing: Joe Stevenson, son of daughter Joy; James Templeton, son of Joe L. Front row: John Martin Visser, son of daughter Alice; Hugh Templeton, son of Joe L.; and Henderson Reese, son of daughter, Elizabeth.

Clarence Core bought the farm from his father, and then at his untimely death in the 1930s, Clarence's son Clyde Core took over the farm. In addition to grain farming, Clyde raised beef cattle and Holstein dairy cattle, and was a breeder of Clydesdale horses. In 1949, he was recognized by *Wallace's Farmer* as a Master Farmer.



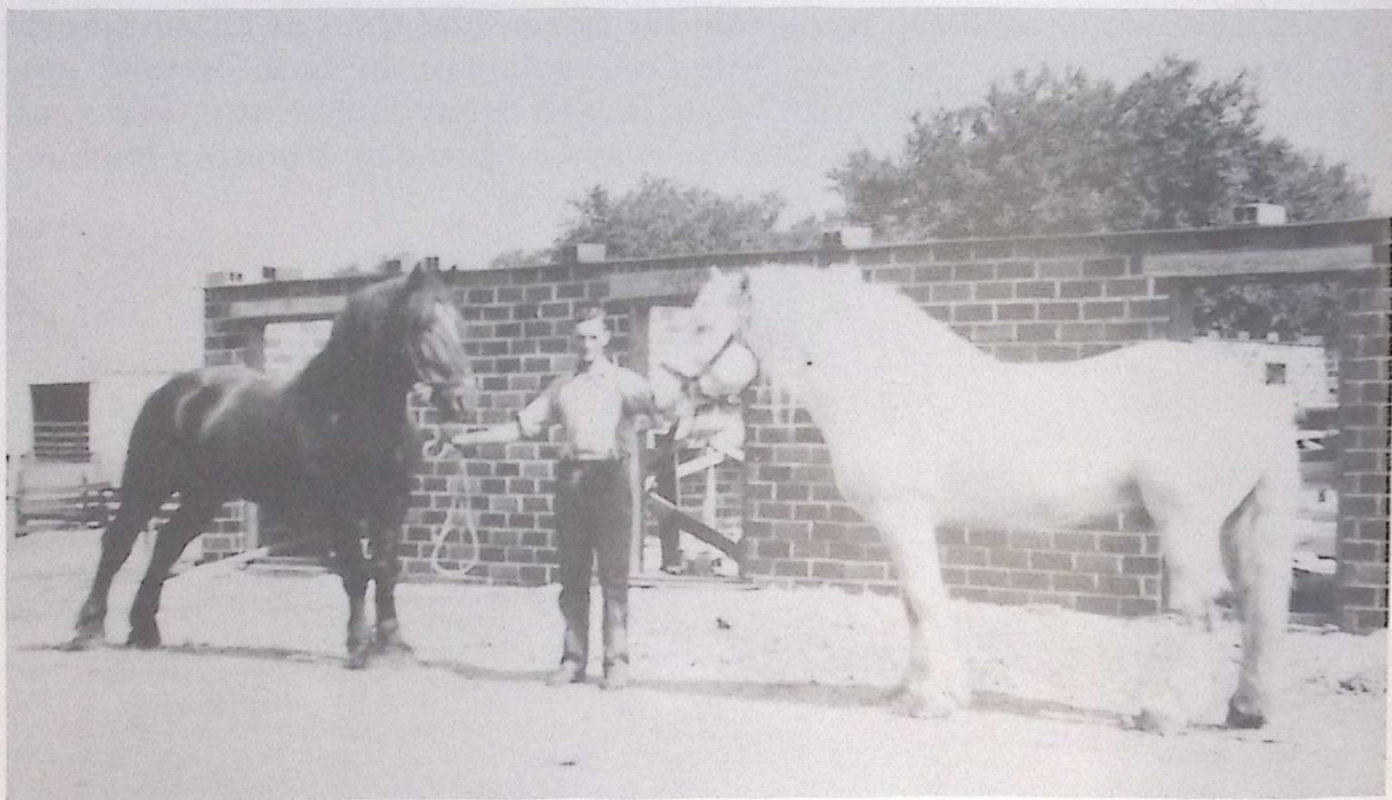
Clyde Core

Clarence Core and sons William, left, Clyde, right, and daughter Alberta. c. 1920.

Periodically, Clyde Core along with Joe Templeton and son Hugh Templeton and Cecil Reese went to the LeGrand Ranch in Valentine, Nebraska (owned by the LeGrands of Dunreath), or to a farm in Missouri to buy cattle for fattening.

The Core farm was remembered through the generations for its sugar maple trees from which they extracted the sap and boiled up 15 or 20 gallons of delicious maple syrup each year. They were also known for their ice harvesting from the Des Moines River in winter. People of the community bought their ice from them. The Cores were hard-working people.

Many other farmers lived on smaller farms and at least got along and provided for their families. Even the small farmers were the fortunate ones during the Depression times, as compared to townspeople.



Clyde Core

Clyde Core and two of his horses. c. 1928.

The Red Rock Townspeople

Almost all people interviewed told about how very poor they had been during the 1930s. They were desperate to raise the money necessary to pay the rent, the taxes, medical bills (often doctors accepted produce in lieu of money), necessary repairs, clothing and school supplies for the children.

Red Rockers raised almost everything they ate. Even though they lived in the town, they had gardens and orchards. And the timber surrounding the town was still a source of wild fruits as well as fuel. Some raised a pig or two and a few chickens. Mushrooms in the spring were a wonderfully welcome addition to the diet. Fishing and hunting were not considered first of all as sports; they were a necessary measure to remain alive. Squirrel and rabbit graced many a meal.

Fish abounded in the river, especially catfish and carp. Catfish was more palatable. Furthermore, carp was hard to eat because of its many fine bones. The women boiled the carp for a long time to make the bones soft. Then they put them in tomato juice and vinegar and canned them. They could pretend they were eating red salmon.

During the Depression, beggars passed through town every now and then, asking for something to eat. Very few women dared to allow one to sleep in her house. Perhaps the family would allow him to sleep in the haymow, though with a bit of apprehension. Some of the beggars were directed to the school house to sleep (presumably never locked). One beggar gave the lady who fed

him several Golden Book songbooks to give to her children. He wanted to show his appreciation. Of course, everyone knew where they came from. Obviously, beggars need to maintain their dignity too.

Women used feed sacks (gaily printed by the feed company) for material for making underwear and dresses and aprons. The Government Extension Service provided patterns for making these items. The following little depression ditty on Feed Sack Underwear applied to the Red Rockers, too.

“When I was a maiden fair,
Mama made our underwear.
With five tots and Pa’s poor pay
How could she buy us lingerie?

Waste not, want not, we soon learned,
Penny saved, penny earned.
Feed sack curtains, tea towels too,
Tablecloths, to name a few
But the best beyond compare
Was our feed sack underwear.”

—Doon Press

In the '30s, Red Rockers lacked opportunities for making anything more than a marginal living. Housing was cheap, and much of it rather substandard. It was all that residents could afford. These were people who for lack of capital were not able to move out of the town. Certain of the residents lived on Government relief. When asked why they stayed in Red Rock, they shrugged and said, “Where else can we go?”

Though times were tough, it must not be assumed that most folks were unhappy. There was no such thing as “keeping up with the Joneses.” The Joneses didn’t have anything either. Fortunately, as people said later, they didn’t realize they were poor; everyone interviewed came up with this same conclusion. The culture of poverty is often happier than the culture of affluence.

Interviews with various Red Rockers concerning what they remembered about the Depression brought forth statements such as:

“I had only one set of school clothing for the whole year. My mother washed my overalls and shirt after I got home from school, and I wore them again the next day. —V.Rickabaugh. “We went barefooted all summer. In the fall, we got new shoes. These had to last for the year. If anything happened to them, we just didn’t have shoes for the rest of the school year.” —Joan Martinache Versteeg.

“We always had to take our school clothes off immediately after school so as to keep them looking nice.” —several people. “When bread went up to 8 cents a loaf, we could not afford to buy bread any more. We often ate pork and beans for supper. Sometimes, we had rhubarb and onion sticks” —Grace Karr.

Several of the children slept on abandoned car seats, which they dragged into the house." —DeHeer. "I won a quarter for the best costume in our Halloween party at school. What do you think I did with it? I went to the store and bought 2 pounds of sugar with the money so that we could have sugar on our oatmeal." —Dale Bumgardner.

With money so short and therefore all desirable items so hard to obtain, it would seem that thieving would have been prevalent in Red Rock. Not so. Several people mentioned that they never locked their doors. The Merle Prices did not lock their doors when they went out of town for three weeks. When they returned, nothing had been touched. Another woman, who had a telephone, always left her door unlocked so that others who didn't have one could come in and use hers—whether she was home or not.

Little money was spent for services. Red Rockers were thoughtful and gracious about helping their neighbors. When a woman wanted her rooms papered, she didn't need to hire someone to do the work. Her women friends and relatives would come. And later she would help them. When a flood threatened, neighbors came with tractors and pickups and boats to move people and goods out of the area. After floods, those who lived on higher ground came to help their less fortunate friends with the cleanup. When a neighbor moved out of the area, neighbors helped wherever possible. When a fire broke out, help arrived fast from every corner. Friends helped their neighbors on the farms worm the sheep and dehorn the cattle.

When a new baby appeared on the scene, some neighbor woman would be over to help take care of mother and baby for a few days. When a neighbor died, help would be forthcoming for every need—doing the chores, taking the children into their own homes for a time, sitting with the body all night long, and digging the grave. Arthur Nichols preached the funeral sermon without charge.

A feeling of responsibility for others and consequently a real sense of community existed.

Making a Living in Red Rock, 1930s to 1960s

Grocery Stores and Their Operators

Through the years, there had been changes in ownership of grocery stores. Red Rock during the hard times of the Depression, or in the years that followed, was certainly not the thriving trade center it had been in the first years of its history. By the 1930s, the only businesses that remained were grocery stores in combination with gasoline stations.

The gasoline filling station had replaced the blacksmith shop which had been such a flourishing business in the days of horses. The last blacksmith shop burned in the 1920s.

The population of Red Rock had dropped to only about 80 people in the decade of the '30s, and the market for store products was small, for shortage

of money prevented townspeople from buying anything not absolutely necessary.

Only one grocery/general store had continued in operation from the earliest days of Red Rock's history to the time of its demise. Folks referred to it as The Red Rock Store or The Red Rock Trading Post. It had experienced many changes in ownership, and changes in buildings. The last one was built in 1929 by Loren Clark (brother of Olive Mikesell).

Grandma Reed's Store

A store that operated in the 1930s and early 1940s in the depths of the Depression, was "Grandma Reed's Store. (Red Rockers had a penchant for calling an older woman "Grandma," and finally nobody could think of what her real name was). She operated a small grocery store and Sinclair filling station, and had a stock of buttons, thread, and other sewing supplies. She lived in the store as well.

Grandma was a native of England who moved as a child with her parents to the United States. She married and was divorced from her coal miner husband in Des Moines, then moved to Minnesota with her son Roland. Times were hard in Minnesota as they were everywhere else in the '30s, and she needed to find a way to make a better living. She saw an ad in her newspaper concerning a store and filling station for sale in Red Rock, Iowa. She bought it from owner Jid Haning, who promised not to open another grocery if she bought his store. Its location was interesting, almost under the footings of the Des Moines River bridge.

When Grandma's son Roland's wife, Frieda, contracted tuberculosis, she had to go to a sanatorium, a stay which lasted eight years, and Roland and his four children moved in with Grandma. Grandma took care of her enlarged family as well as operating the store. The competition of not only the Red Rock Trading Post, owned at that time by Sherman Boyd, as well as the store and barber shop operated by George "Jid" Haning (despite his promise) resulted in meager sales for Grandma.

In 1942, Mrs. Reed sold her store to Arthur Nichols, who remodeled it and used it as his home rather than as a store. When her family cleared out the store before giving possession to Nichols, they found a desk drawer with a big stack of IOUs for unpaid bills. These amounted to hundreds of dollars. During the depression days, people could charge the groceries, and when it came time to pay, they had no money. Grandma had almost supported certain of the Red Rock people.

Grandma died and was buried in Des Moines. Daughter-in-law Frieda died at age 48. Son Roland worked with Merle Price in the gravel business in Red Rock until he died in 1956 at age 60. Roland and Frieda were both buried in the Red Rock Cemetery.

Roland and Frieda's children all left Red Rock. Nadine taught in rural schools

in the Red Rock vicinity before marrying Professor Joe Woods of Drake University at Des Moines. Daughters Lois and Dorothy left the community, too, and son Ernie, after serving in the Armed forces in England and marrying an English woman, moved to Des Moines.

The Red Rock Trading Post, Arthur Nichols, Manager, 1942-47

For about five years, Arthur Nichols managed the Red Rock Trading Post, then owned by Sherman Boyd. Boyd had traded a Colorado farm in exchange for the Trading Post. Arthur was born in the nearby village of Dunreath, about three miles from Red Rock, where he had worked on the Wabash Railroad, forming with his three brothers an entire section crew. Dunreath at that time had four coal mines and still mined a great deal of coal. Coal was the main reason for the railroad having been routed through Dunreath.

Nichols recalls that every summer, gypsies from Oklahoma came to Red Rock and set up tents in the Red Rock bluffs. They dug up herbs and made medicines and came down to the store in the evenings. It was wise for the young gypsy girls not to stroll downtown except in groups. The local young men followed them, teasing them and wearing white sheets in an effort to scare the girls. The gypsies were never known to make any trouble.

When he was middle-aged, Arthur Nichols became an elder in the Latter Day Saints' Church in Knoxville, and in this capacity, he conducted services, performed weddings, and officiated at funerals. He performed these services in the Red Rock Independent Evangelical Church when they did not have a pastor. Nichols never refused his services, and he never charged for them.

Nichols was much interested in the history of Red Rock and the surrounding area, and he became an authority on the subject. He spoke frequently on Red Rock history as well as on religious subjects. He was the speaker for various occasions. He gave the Baccalaureate address for the Monroe High School Class of 1960, and he spoke at men's meetings, etc.

For Nichols, 1947 was not a good year—nor for anyone else in Red Rock. He recalls the Flood of 1947 in an article he wrote for the *Knoxville Journal* of July 2, 1984. Concerning the store, he said, "The water was so high it came up to the mouthpiece of the telephone hanging on the wall. The store was ruined. Canned goods were floating everywhere. All the labels had been soaked off by the waters, so we couldn't tell what they were. The meat case, meat saw, cooler, and ice cream freezer were all ruined. The pop bottles were all worthless, too. Mud had gotten up underneath the caps, and we could not sell them. Every time we opened the door to the store, the bottles would come bobbing out like a row of soldiers."

The store was closed for a time, and Nichols obtained permanent employment with the Maytag Company, commuting to Newton each day.

The Red Rock Trading Post—1942-54

In 1948, the Red Rock Store (Red Rock Trading Post) was purchased from

Fred Oetjen by Marion (Slim) and Marie Rinehart. It included a Phillips filling station. A kitchen and a shower were added to the store at that time and served as their living quarters. Son-in-law Gerald Arment and wife Anna helped run the store.



Anna Arment

Marion (Slim) and Marie Rinehart in front of the Red Rock Trading Post. c. 1950

They ran a good store. In addition to the usual items such as coffee, tea, tobacco, flour and dry cereals, they carried a variety of canned goods, fresh meats, cold drinks, and ice cream. The latter items, of course, were made possible only after the advent of electricity to Red Rock. They sold gumboots and overshoes and various other items.



Anna Arment

The Red Rock Trading Post, c. 1950.

The Red Rock Store was much more than a place to buy groceries and fill up the tank with gasoline. It was a gathering place, a place to pick up the latest news, to visit and to swap stories with other residents, all of whom were well known to one another. Many a time there was a card game going. The store was open from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m., seven days a week except Sundays when the hours were from 8 to 5. The Arments worked hard and long.

After television came on the market in the 1950s, they bought a Stuart Warner table model set, and townspeople and neighboring farmers dropped in to see TV and, as a result, it was hard to get the store closed at night because of those who just had to finish the program they were viewing.

By the 1950s, the population of Red Rock had fallen so much and transportation facilities had so improved as to make shopping in larger towns possible, that even a good convenience store such as theirs could not generate enough business to continue. The Rineharts tried to sell the store in 1954 but were unable to do so. They decided to close the store but to continue living in the building. When they closed the store, Red Rock which through most of its history had three stores, now had none. It was the end of an era in Red Rock when the store, which had flourished through all Red Rock's history, finally ceased to exist.

The Grover (Bud) Williams' Watermelon Business

The soil on the Des Moines River bottoms was a sandy loam, excellent for growing watermelons, and Red Rock was known far and wide for its good melons.

Grover (Bud) Williams was an independent enterpriser who did quite well with his business. He lived in one of the nicer homes in Red Rock. He grew watermelons across the river, and he sold them from a stand on the highway as well as from his home. In early fall he took watermelons into Knoxville on a wagon pulled by two large mules. As he drove past the schoolhouse with melons those first days of school, the children's mouths watered with longing, but he didn't stop to share any with them. Of course, they raided his patch when they could.

In later years, he took truckloads to the sale barn in Knoxville. A manager of a Knoxville store came by each day in the fall to buy melons.

The Williams lived very near the river, and for a time Grover (Bud) operated a sawmill. In addition, one of his jobs was to measure the rising and falling of the river during flood times. Furthermore, his friends enjoyed the delicious red wine Bud made and stored in large barrels.

Bud was born and raised in Red Rock. His ancestors had lived in Red Rock from its earliest days. His grandfather was Martin Hollingsworth, who operated the first ferry. The Williams had figured prominently in Red Rock for more than a century. Their daughter Jessie Williams Bruce had taught in Red Rock for several years, and their son Clyde conducted a funeral home in Knoxville. Clifford was a construction worker on the Wabash Railroad. *(These Williams were*

not of the same family as Horry Williams mentioned in Chapter 8.) When it came time for everyone to leave Red Rock, the Willams were the second to the last family to do so.



Clyde Williams

Fiftieth Wedding Anniversary, Grover (Bud) and Daisy Williams, June 2, 1957. Back row: children Clifford "Sonny", Jessie, and Clyde.

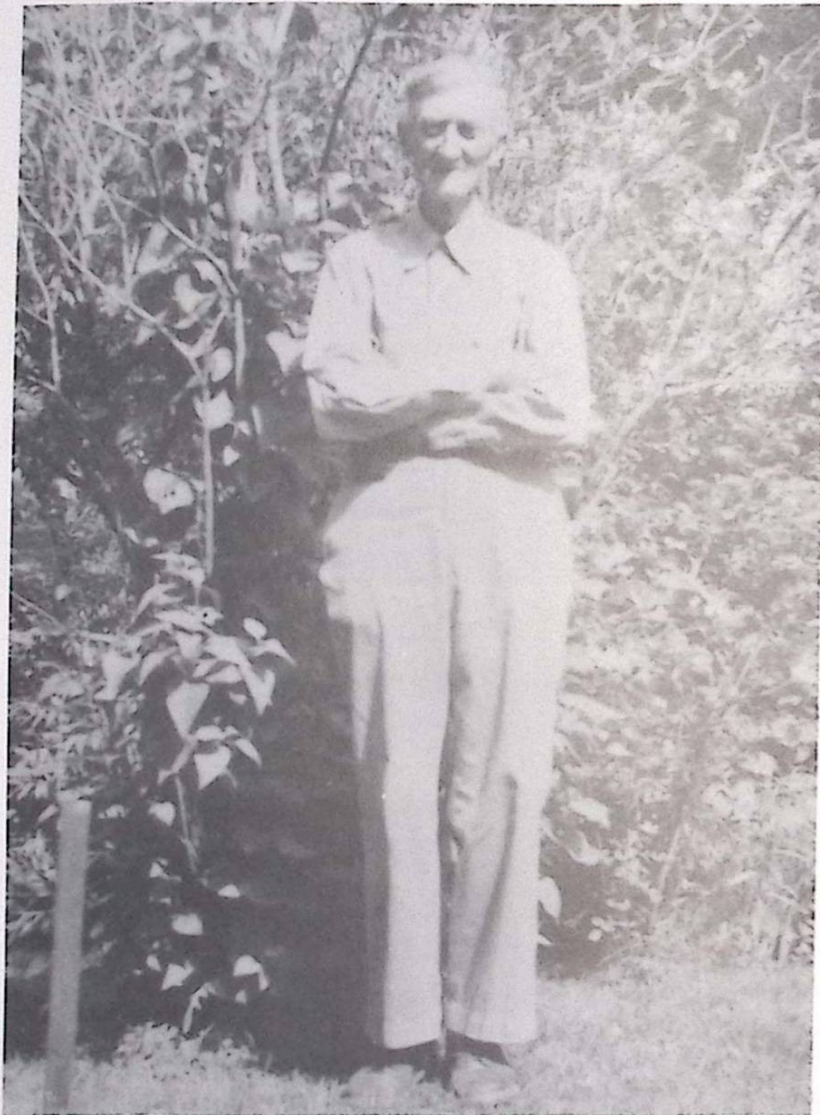
Other Watermelon Producers

George Buttrey, who also stemmed from an early Red Rock family, had a stand on Highway 14 and sold watermelons. It was said that Buttrey and Williams did not speak to each other as they were bitter rivals in the watermelon trade.

Don Balmer, who was a polio victim, had several small enterprises going so as to make enough to live. He sold melons and garden produce in season. In addition, he installed a cooler and in the summer months sold soft drinks and candy. He was, however, principally a bee keeper and sold honey. He was a bit pathetic in that his wife had deserted him and taken the children with her. The Red Rockers didn't accept him socially—likely because he was a cripple. He lived in a mobile home. He was a plucky man and a hard worker.

(Columbus) Griffith Mikesell was a small farmer, farming on the 40 acres left of the original 160 acres of land his father, pioneer John Huff Mikesell, had laid claim to in the 1840s. Griffith raised watermelons and sold them from a stand he had erected in front of his home on Highway 14.

Griffith, it will be remembered, was a son of John Mikesell's second marriage, and his father was 71 years at the time of Griffith's birth. As Red Rock's oldest citizen at the time of his death in 1960, he was a wonderful source for the history of almost the entire span of life of the village of Red Rock—the brick hotel, the original stores and saloons, the blacksmith shop, the quarry, the ferry boats that crossed the river, the steamboats that plied the Des Moines River for a time—he could remember them all—or his father told them about those early times, and he felt he had experienced them, too. Most other people remembered little of these things, and it was as if he were a man from another planet, speaking of all these unknown phenomena. Griffith was a well-read, intelligent man.



Hough Mikesell

Griffith Mikesell as an old man.

Griffith's wife Olive helped support the family by making dip nets and fish nets, and the children—Bill, Hough, and Roy—helped. Olive was blind as was her son Roy, and in later years Hough became blind also.

Fishing and hunting Enterprises

Plato Alley and his unmarried brother Bill Alley loved the river, and spent

much of their time fishing and selling their catch in Red Rock, Knoxville, and even Pella. They fished the river for miles upstream and downstream.

The Alleys fished with nets, they drew big trotlines all the way across the river, another illegal practice. They caught big fish with their hands, and whatever other game laws there were, they broke them. The community was glad to buy the fish, however, which made them equally guilty. In fact, Red Rockers chuckled at the ways the brothers evaded the law—as, for example, catching a ride to Knoxville with the sheriff, while the cream can they were carrying was filled with illegal fish.

The game warden was always on their trail, however, and once when the warden was on the river in his boat, cutting and destroying the Alley's nets, Bill sat on one of the bluffs and shot holes in the bottom of the warden's boat. By the time the game warden got to Bill's house looking for the gun that had shot the holes, Bill had it safely hidden upstairs.

The Alley brothers were not the only law breakers. Practically everyone felt justified in fishing with nets because they had to have the fish in order to live. And they loved the stories of the Alley brothers vs. the game wardens. Good stories to tell those assembled in the store at night. They also appreciated Plato and Bill's generosity to those who were down and out. When someone was in need of food but unable to buy the fish, the Alleys brothers were likely to share their catch though they themselves lived in poverty.

Plato knew the river bottom so well, its deep holes and its little sheltered bays, that when someone had drowned, Plato was often asked to help find the body. He was usually right when he named some certain spot as the likely one where the current would have carried the body and lodged it in some narrow opening. Ironically, at these times, he was working with, not against, the law.

Plato was a good hunter, too, and was the only one known in Red Rock who could shoot a flying duck with a revolver. (Billy Mikesell who could shoot flying quail with a revolver was almost a match for Plato.)

Bill Alley was a bachelor, an eccentric, according to people in Red Rock, a "character," who wore ribbons in the braids of his long matted unkempt hair. He had a pet cow who licked the top of Bill's bald head, while Bill lay under the cow and tickled its belly. At times, he grazed his cow on the school ground, not a pleasant situation for the school children. He was requested by the school board not to do this, so he proceeded to do so only at night, with the same unpleasant results for the school children. However, he was a good-natured fellow and the children liked him.

Red Rockers were tolerant of Bill and kind to him, and when his shack burned down, his neighbors found a trailer for him in Pella, bought it and hauled it to Red Rock. He died at the County Farm in 1953. A sad ending for an Alley, one of Red Rock's very old families.

Trappers had their problems with the game wardens, too—though perhaps that should be stated in reverse. It depends whether one is on the side of the

trapper or the game warden. Trapping raccoon, muskrat, mink, and skunk was another of those wonderful opportunities afforded by the river for sport as well as for economic gain. There was a market for the skins, though, of course, trapping was a marginal type of enterprise. And there was always the problem of hiding the traps so as to elude the game warden. They must trap a particular animal only in the season prescribed by the law. Trappers accused certain game wardens of opening their traps and taking out the best for themselves—which elicited a special form of wrath!

Wood and Gravel Products

Saw milling, one of Red Rock's oldest industries, continued through Red Rock's history. Merle Price operated a saw mill as his father Bob Price had done before him. For a while each had a sawmill, and later there was just one. At first, they operated the small mill using water power, but later Merle got a steam engine which he fired with slab and sawdust.



Cecil Price

Bob Price's sawmill on the river, 1934. Red Rock bridge in the background.

Merle had a gravel pit and sold and hauled gravel from the riverbed for many building projects in the community. For several years, Earl Martinache scooped gravel for him, and he was a remarkably hard and good worker. Roland Reed drove a truck for him for several years, until his death in 1956. Then Merle continued excavating gravel by himself.

Merle was indeed a well known, well thought of personage in Red Rock. He was a man of inventive genius, a hard worker, handy at carpentry, and a generous man. He continued his activities in Red Rock until the time he was forced to leave to make way for the Red Rock Dam. He and his wife, Cecil Karr Price, were the last people to leave Red Rock. They moved to a farmhouse south of Knoxville.

Merle was a faithful member of the Adventist Church, and he and Cecil worked tirelessly through the years to gather and distribute many items of clothing, shoes, pieces of bedding, and household articles for the poor. Cecil gave piano lessons to students of the Red Rock-Cordova area. For several years

she was also a news correspondent for the *Knoxville Journal*, her column named "Late News from Red Rock." The Prices lived in an attractive neat-looking house, and Cecil now lives alone and continues her charity for the poor.

Roy Coe, born and raised in the Red Rock community, but living in New Sharon during the latter part of his life, operated a saw mill near Cordova until his death in 1960, and the business was then carried on by his sons Roy and Wayne. Theirs was a fairly large operation. Those who had timberland in the Red Rock-Cordova area were cutting down the trees at a mighty rate during the last decades. Farmers were trying to expand the number of acres they had under cultivation. In addition, lumber merchants, eyeing the magnificent walnut and other hardwood trees, came in and bought and shipped logs out by the carload via the Wabash.

Sawmilling was big business in Red Rock in its last days. It was known that the trees would be under water within a short time anyway, and one might as well get what he could from them. In fact, sawmilling and lumbering had always been big business in Red Rock because of their great stands of magnificent trees.

Red Rock, a Bedroom Town

Finding work outside the town was a fairly unknown phenomenon for Red Rockers before World War II. However, with workers in defense plants, combined with the great shortage of workers because of the many men in the armed services, new opportunities opened up to those who had been doing very marginal types of work or who were unemployed in Red Rock.

Maytag in Newton was the leading employer of Red Rock men. The Veterans Hospital in Knoxville was another important one.

It was still rather rare for Red Rock women (except for rural teachers) to find employment out of town or even to work outside the home, but that situation was changing also during wartime. Arthur Nichols, Edgar Buttrey, Ted Buttrey, Jack Donahue, Bill Mikesell, Marion (Slim) Rinehart, Jim Riherd, Earl Martinache, George Israel, Elmer Cooper, and doubtless others commuted to Newton in the Maytag bus. Anyone who wanted to work could get a job. Obviously, this represented a large percentage of the Red Rock potential work force. Maytag was a real boon for Red Rockers. Cash awards were given to workers who came up with good ideas for making the plant more efficient. Earl Martinache, Ted Buttrey, Bill Mikesell, and Marion (Slim) Rinehart were among those who were honored by these awards.

In the early 1940s, Huff Mikesell, Robert Haning, Dale Bumgardner, Dave Bumgardner, and Donald Balmer rode together to Rolscreen in Pella to work.

Red Rock had become a bedroom town.

Recreation and Entertainment

"That man is richest whose pleasures are the cheapest."

—Henry David Thoreau

Unfortunately, Red Rock had its share of people who, rather than exert themselves too much, preferred to sit and watch the world go by. However, most Red Rockers reveled in just being in the great out-of-doors and finding their entertainment there. They delighted in meeting challenges, where they could exercise their ingenuity or brute strength or both. Hunting, fishing, trapping were favorites, especially when done in the company of others. And such sheer joy in looking for mushrooms! "Anyone who could walk would be out in the springtime hunting for mushrooms."

Baseball was the favorite summer Sunday afternoon sport. The Red Rock Roamers, as they called themselves, packed in the back of a truck bound for a neighboring town—Harvey, their arch rival, Pershing with its many black players, Bussey, Belinda, or Melcher—and they were off to play ball!

Uniforms were not necessary or available. Of course, they had to appoint an umpire. His was not such an enviable job because the spectators and teams didn't necessarily accept his decisions. Arguments and fist fights resulted, and sometimes the umpire ran away to avoid being attacked, and perhaps the game broke up at least for a time so that tempers could cool. It didn't seem like a real game, in fact, if they didn't have a fight when they played Harvey.

At the home games, the women sat on benches on the sidelines and engaged in pleasant chats with friends, and the children ran around in an excited frenzy as they watched their heroes, their fathers and brothers, play the opposing team. Afterwards, everyone felt tired but exhilarated, and some maybe a bit tipsy. A great Sunday afternoon! The game could be played and replayed in men's minds for days to come and was good grist for conversation and stories.

It was noised about, and actually it was no secret, that the men played poker in the caves of the Red Rock bluffs—for money. Evidently this practice continued for years. They could play better if they had a little home-brewed beer or wine available. There was a joke among them that the best-tasting home brew was one made in a certain person's chicken coop, and they wondered whether any hen droppings had gotten into the concoction. Sometimes, they sent a boy off to Boyd's Store for some 3.2 beer if their supply needed to be replenished.

The men loved to go coon hunting in the moonlight. Their fishing parties could last up to several days. After a great day of fishing, how very special it was to camp along the river around a fire at night.

Family picnics at the bluffs, accompanied by gathering wild flowers or going for a good climb into the bluffs, ranked high among Sunday pleasures. Snakes were numerous so caution was necessary. Poison ivy could well make the succeeding days agonizing if one were not careful. However, the red bluffs were dear to Red Rockers for almost any type of gathering.

For a time, a Mr. Pete Acklin came to show outdoor movies, a highlight of the week. One had to pay for the movies but it was only a few cents.

Inasmuch as the people of Red Rock were so interrelated, practically

everyone had uncles, cousins, etc. living within a few doors and thus could visit frequently, exchange meals, celebrate birthdays and holidays, chat over the back fence, and fully enjoy each others company. The warmth and security of friends enriched their lives. On the other hand, there were families where certain members never spoke to each other for reasons of inheritance disagreements, or seemingly petty reasons. Gossip was rampant in Red Rock, which might be expected in such a tight community.

Women's Recreation

Entertainments special to the women included going to various meetings—which women seem to enjoy more than men do.

In the '30s, the Farm Bureau became important in the lives of Iowa women, not only farm women but women from the small towns, too. In addition to wanting to learn about homemaking, they were likely starved for social outlets outside the home. One such meeting was reported by Grace Karr as follows: "The Farm Bureau of Red Rock Township met with Mrs. Harrison Le Grand all day Thursday. Three trays were prepared for sick folks. The first one was a liquid diet and contained fruit eggnog. The second was a soft diet and contained banana snow. The third tray, a convalescent diet, contained mik, toast, spinach, baked potatoes, baked apples, and cocoa.

"The dinner that was served for the ladies that attended was escalloped potatoes with bacon strips, baked apples, brown and white bread, prune salad, coffee, and burnt sugar cake. The afternoon was spent piecing quilts, a popular activity with Red Rock women, and braiding rugs." "Cordova News," *Pella Chronicle*, 1/18/1932)

The women organized Bible Study meetings, quilting bees, and Church Ladies' Aid meetings where they sewed necessary items for the men in service.

For a time they had a Flower Club. They exchanged pointers on how to grow a variety of flowers, and flower slips were exchanged. One woman even went to the Pella Cemetery to gather flower slips. They grew immense beds of flowers, and all could enjoy. The aesthetic side of their natures was fed by seeing the beautiful results of their efforts. True, the little boys who had to hoe the weeds didn't feel so ecstatic about it. One little boy, now a man, reports the tedium associated with hoeing his mother's enormous flower garden when he wanted so much to have fun playing.

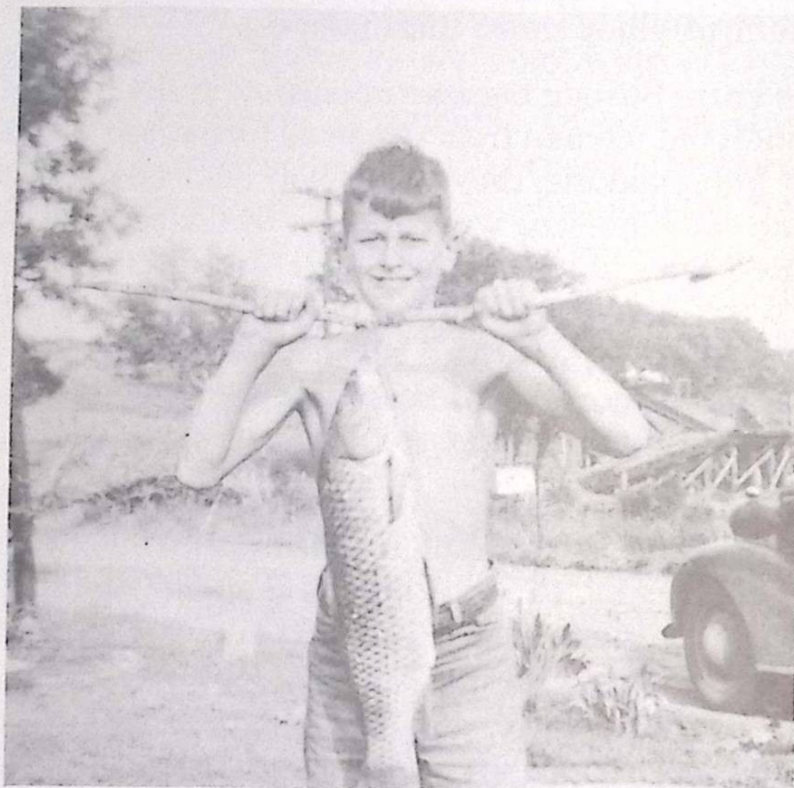
Planting space was plentiful, so it was an inexpensive wonderful hobby. And what a delightful surprise it was to find an armful of flowers on one's back porch—a gift from a cherished friend.

Recreation for Children and Young People

Children and young people did not need to be entertained every moment they were not in school. Chores were the unwelcome lot of children of every age. Household tasks, taking care of the younger children, weeding and hoe-

ing the garden, milking the cow, running errands, helping in the store, whatever else there was to do, took up a great deal of their time.

Time off, the time when one didn't have to help work at home, was special and highly appreciated. There were several spots where kids loved to go for having lots of fun. The Des Moines River was a favorite spot. Fishing was the prime recreational activity for men and boys of all ages. As one person reported, he would rather fish than eat. Anyone who had the opportunity to swim or fish or go canoeing or look for arrowheads along the river banks will never forget those exhilarating experiences.



Joan Martinache Ver Steeg

Don Martinache loved to fish, as do boys of all ages.

One person said the most fun he had as a kid was climbing on the Des Moines River bridge, walking and swinging on top of it, and sliding down again. Others agreed. A gymnast's dream and a mother's gray hairs.

Another wonderful water spot was Marigold Springs on the south bank of the river. A natural clear, cold spring issued from an opening a little more than a foot wide and created a fine swimming area. The boys of the community had made a diving board there. A large number of people gathered in the evenings to cool off, especially during the excessively hot summer of 1936.

On Saturday nights, Marigold Springs was a great place to dance. To get to it, one had to walk across the bridge to the south side of the river, then wind up the hills, walk through a pasture, and there up on a higher place next to the springs, a small building with a good dance floor had been erected. Here people could kick up their heels for an evening of good fun. A drummer and a fiddler provided the music free of charge.

The music could be heard and appreciated across the river in Red Rock town. Granny Adams was one who vicariously enjoyed the dance as she sat on the roof of her store and listened and tapped her feet to the music—to the amusement of other Red Rockers. Most of the people interviewed thought it was a wholesome place; a few said they knew of some questionable things that went on there—in addition to drinking.

Another favorite water spot was a deep pond back of the Red Rock Store. It was deep enough for a person to drown in it. In fact, on one occasion, some excitement was caused when LeRoy De Heer fell in the pond and was saved by his thirteen-year old friend, Billy Gene Karr, who jumped in and pulled LeRoy out of the water.

Fishing in the pond in summer and ice fishing in winter occupied many pleasant hours for Red Rockers, including the children. On Saturdays, many ice skaters gathered, and twirled and sometimes fell down, but all enjoyed it immensely. One did not have to have skates to participate.

County Fair time was a wonderful time in August for the children and young people, in fact for whole families. It involved demonstrating the products of their efforts—for the boys showing baby beeves they had raised, and for the girls showing the aprons they had sewed or the cakes and cookies they had learned to make. It was work which had been turned into play and exciting competition. It was fun too to meet their friends and visit all the exhibits with them, watch the horse races and eat the picnic lunches their mothers had prepared. Often the Fair was the last big summer outing before school began again.

In the snowy winter time, sledding and coasting off the hills was an exciting experience. Or, it could turn into a painful experience. Even young adults had had accidents coasting down the bluffs. In the winter of 1937, for example, a group of young fellows, including John Martin Visser and Merrit and Lloyd Karr, improvised a sled from a piece of roofing. One end was turned up like a toboggan and a wire attached. They seated themselves with legs extended on each side. After a shove off the top of the hill, they landed in the ditch. The impact broke George Dailey's leg. The doctor was called and George Dailey taken to the hospital in Des Moines, where he remained for several weeks.

Kids rode down the hills on scoops, skis made of boards, or anything that would slide. Smashed upper lips and bloody noses sometimes resulted, but nothing could dampen their enthusiasm for long. Back to the top of the hill to try again!

Life was serious during depression days, but what pleasant times Red Rockers had as well. The common experiences, even the disagreements and the fights, shared day after day in both work and play accounted for the strong lasting friendships they formed. Those old Red Rock friends will always be their best friends.

When old timers today evaluate living in Red Rock in the past, they say that the best time was in the '30s, and as far as they are concerned it was the real Red Rock in quality of life.

Chapter 11

THE RED ROCK SCHOOL IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

“Tis education that forms the common mind:
Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined.”

—Alexander Pope

Teachers and Their Pupils

What a heavy responsibility the teacher had for forming and ennobling the minds of boys and girls who sat behind the desks at the rural school. And what wonderful tributes the one-time boys and girls give to those who taught them in years long past.

It was an arduous task for the teachers. After the very early years of Red Rock's history when the school had over 80 pupils, only one teacher was hired. He/she taught all eight grades, sometimes with 40 to 50 pupils, each with his/her own special needs.

The teacher, in addition to all the class preparations necessary, correcting so many different types of papers and maintaining discipline, prepared the students for Christmas and end-of-the-year programs, kept the schoolhouse swept and clean, carried coal for the furnace, started and kept the fire going each day, emptied the ashes, cooked a hot dish for the pupils' lunch, comforted pupils when they got hurt, gave first aid when necessary, and kept records of attendance for a report to the County Superintendent.

Before the days of good roads, the teacher roomed with some family in the community or, when the roads were bad, drove as far as he/she could get through, then walked the rest of the way.

In general, the teachers were respected and affirmed by the patrons and children. A tight bond existed between teacher and community. When an emergency occurred in the teacher's life, or even a wedding, school was called off for a day or longer without any questions asked. During World War II, when Sarah Jane Templeton's Army husband, Dwight Harvey, was home on furlough, a substitute was hired for the two weeks he was at home.

Nanny Hyatt, Teacher During the Second Decade

Nannie Hyatt is almost a legend in Marion County, where she taught for more than 50 years. She taught in several rural schools including Red Rock. In 1921, she left Red Rock and finished her career in the Knoxville schools. She was very tiny, about five feet tall, but she could hold her own in even the toughest discipline cases. She was respected, and she was an inspiration to her pupils.



Clyde Williams

Nanny Hyatt, teacher extraordinary.

In Red Rock, she roomed with the Grover Williams family. Later, when the Williams boys went to high school in Knoxville, they roomed at her house. She was unmarried, and the Williams were "her family." She died in 1954 at the age of 90 years.

E. O. Osborn, Knoxville poet, paid tribute to her in these words: "In the small circle of influence in which we live, her hand has helped to guide our destinations." (Osborne, n.d., 65).

Reda Martin (Van Zante) taught in Red Rock, 1925-26. She had 50 pupils, 11 of whom were beginners! She had considerable anxiety about giving the beginners enough time while at the same time getting in all the class sessions for the other grades. The crowding in the schoolroom was so great; and her task was so overwhelming that she decided the next year to teach at a smaller school (North Porterville), where she could do justice to the job.



Ruth Perkey

Red Rock pupils and teacher Jessie Williams, 1929. Front row, l-r: Lois Reed, Robert Haning, unidentified, Bob Karr, Hough Mikesell, Raymond Speas. 2nd row: Harold Rickabaugh, Betty Jo Wing, Forrest Dailey, unidentified, Nadine Reed, Colleen Alley, Herman Karr, Kenneth Hollingsworth. Third row: Maxine Speas, LaVerl Dailey, Vernon Rickabaugh, Duane Ruckman, Kenneth Riherd, Madge Hart, Betty Ford, Dorothy Alley, Gail Wing, Jessie Williams, teacher. Back row: Ellsworth Shilling, Gene Haning, Maxine Cooper, Walter Wing, Thelma Hollingsworth, Donald Ford, Bill Core, Dale Bumgardner.

Several Teachers of the 1940s and 1950s

Experiences of a few teachers give insights of Red Rock school life during the years 1940-1958:

Ruth Hart Perkey taught in Red Rock from 1939-1941. She is the granddaughter of John and Elizabeth Wright, early residents of Red Rock, who later played leading roles in the new town of Cordova. Ruth grew up in Cordova. She attended the Red Rock school, except for one year in the Fair Oaks school, where Grace Karr was her teacher.

Besides teaching, Ruth was active in the Church. She had been baptized in the Des Moines River at age 14, and she was the pianist for the Red Rock Church for many years.

Ruth taught in the "old school," the one which burned December 14, 1943. She had 40 pupils, with all eight grades plus kindergarten represented. She says she had to be very strict in order to maintain discipline, and this is certainly understandable. Three eighth graders had to be prepared for the county

examinations, a requirement for graduation. She often worked with them at night, drilling them for what might be expected in the exams. She had a very demanding task.

In addition, Billy Gene Karr, who was only a seventh grader, represented the Red Rock School in the county spelling contest. He finished in 5th place, having had to bow to the word, "magnanimous."

Ruth taught for two years, after which she and her husband, Lynn Perkey, moved to a farm near Dallas, Iowa.

Mary Beary, who came from the Buxton area, taught in Red Rock the 1941-1942 school year. She was in Red Rock only for this one year because of her approaching marriage to James Hindman of Pleasantville. She said of her year in Red Rock:

"Zack Ruckman, Clyde Core, and James Templeton were the school directors. Mrs. Grace Karr of Cordova was the Secretary. There were 28 pupils, and my salary was \$100 a month. I had my room and board with William and Maude Riherd. Mrs. Riherd made wonderful pies, and every morning she fired the old range and made light, tasty baking powder biscuits several inches high for breakfast. They were perfect!

"The school building was far finer than the average school, one of the most attractive in the area—it had a beautiful hardwood floor. There was a large one-room furnace in one corner, a large cloak room across the front, and quite unusual for a one-room school, a raised stage across the back of the school room.

"It was during World War II. School was dismissed one day for people of the community to come and get their ration cards for flour, sugar, shoes, and probably tires. The teacher was responsible for the sign-ups.

"Commodities (apples, oranges, canned beans, and soup) were furnished by the Government to supplement the children's lunch. The teacher was asked to prepare one hot dish each day, using the materials furnished. We had a large kettle, a can opener, and Reynolds aluminum wrap as our kitchen materials.

"We had a spacious playground. The coal and kindling shed was to the right and near the front of the school. The boys' toilet was far to the left and back of the school, and the girls' was to the right. These were Government W.P.A. projects." (*The W. P. A. built hundreds of these outdoor toilets around Iowa, all on the same pattern.*)

Jessie Williams Bruce, daughter of the Grover Williams, who had also taught in Red Rock in 1929 before she was married, was the teacher in 1942-43

when pupil Dorothy Reed brought honor to herself and her teacher when she became the Marion County spelling champion. She then went on to the State Spelling Contest in Des Moines where she was finally eliminated.

Jessie was the teacher when the beautiful schoolhouse burned in December, 1943. There could be no worse time for a fire than during wartime because the men of the community were frantically busy trying to keep the farmwork taken care of with so many of the farm boys off to war. The school was closed for several weeks until it was determined that classes would resume in the church. Jessie's job and that of her pupils must have been difficult, adjusting to facilities not intended for classroom use. In 1944, **Sarah Jane Templeton Harvey** taught in this difficult church setting while her husband was off to war. The church doubled as a school for almost two years until a new school, the last one, was built and made ready for use.

Mary Perkey, was the teacher when the June 12, 1947, flood wreaked severe damage on this new school as it stood in the murky waters for days. The piano, the teachers desk, and books were ruined. The floor and walls were waterlogged and in bad condition. Folks from the community worked frantically to lay a new floor and repair and paint the walls. The school was ready for classes to begin again in August. Box suppers and homemade candies were sold in the community to raise money for a new piano.

Basil White, teacher at Red Rock, 1951-1952, and hired for the 1952 school year, resigned in November, 1952 to take up a Government job as substitute railroad mail clerk in Chicago. (No wonder—he had 40 pupils.)

Sarah Jane Templeton Harvey, daughter of the Joe Templetons, who had taught at Red Rock in the 1930s and again in the middle '40s, was asked to substitute until a new teacher could be found. She was a teacher who had always inspired respect and affection; the pupils thought she was great. Meanwhile the school board met at Hugh Templetons to choose a permanent replacement for Mr. White. (*A school alumnus said that of all the teachers he had had, he liked Sarah Jane the most because she took the pupils to the Red Rock bluffs for wiener roasts.*)

Edgar Van Arkel of Pella was hired to begin November 17, 1952. When the students were so informed, they were unhappy and angry. They marched around the schoolhouse chanting, "We want Sarah Jane. We want Sarah Jane." Fortunately, they liked Mr. Van Arkel, the new teacher, and he continued to teach at Red Rock until the school was closed in 1958.

The enrollment was large and at times disciplinary problems arose. Mr. Van Arkel conceived of a constructive type of punishment, a "community service" sort of thing. For example, the wrongdoer was required to go outside, and depending on the seriousness of the offense, pick a prescribed number of thistles (of which there were many) from the schoolyard. Or, a misbehavior might lead to picking up the trash from the schoolyard, or of finding rocks that would be interesting for the classes to study—all of these punishments were more appealing than the use of the hickory stick.



Edgar Van Arkel

Boxing is noonday fun. c. 1956. L-R: Jerry Martinache, Martha Templeton, Linda Nichols, Don Martinache.



Edgar Van Arkel

Red Rock School kids make a snow fort, l-r: Sue Karr, Sharon Karr, Jean De Heer, Becky De Heer, Jane Ann Templeton, Linda Nichols, Bonnie De Heer, Linda Arment, Rose Ann Clare, Martha Templeton.

What began as sheer fun for the students one wintry week in 1957 turned out to become a session for teaching the children civic responsibility. An amusing item written by Rose Ann Clare, 5th grade, for their little school paper called *The Three R's* gives the details. "Monday, there wasn't any school because the roads were too slippery to drive on. Tuesday, we started to make a snow house. Wednesday, we finished building the snow house by putting on the roof. Thursday, we had a snowball fight and were caught at it, so we had to stay in at recess and noon, and we had to work around school, such as wash Mr. Van Arkel's car, scrub toilets, and wash windows. Friday, we had to do the rest of the work at recess."

In keeping with newer trends in education, the traditional 3 R's were supplemented with a "hands on" approach—learning by observing and doing. They went on a train trip, their first, to Keokuk (in a coach with Union, Blaine, and Whitebreast school pupils) to visit the great Mississippi River and the locks, to observe the opening and closing of a bridge to let a loaded barge go through, and to take a boat ride on the Addie May. Imagine the excitement and the learning that went on.



Edgar Van Arkel

Red Rock pupils visit Public Library, Pella, 1958. First row, l-r: Gerald De Heer, 1st; Susan Karr, 1st; Ronald Adams, 6th. Second row: Wendell Clare, 4th; Phillip De Heer, 3rd, Joe Templeton, 3rd. Third row: Sharon Karr, 4th; Becky De Heer, 4th; Rose Ann Clare, 6th. Fourth row: Jane Ruth Riherd, 6th; Linda Lou Nichols, 7th; Jane Ann Templeton, 8th. Fifth row: Martha Templeton, 6th; Bonnie De Heer, 5th. Back row: Mr. Van Arkel, teacher, holding Patty Mikesell, Kdg.

The students acquired practical knowledge by repairing the screens, putting in a floor in the entrance of the school attic (lumber provided by the school board), and cooking a nutritious lunch now and then. The students themselves arranged for athletic events with other schools and for social events involving the community. Thus they equipped themselves for adult types of roles in life.

Commitment of the Adults to the Red Rock School

Instead of expecting some Government agency to provide funds to make the school an attractive, useful place, the adults of the community involved themselves in raising money for playground equipment, and one family donated an electric stove and another, a piano. They fenced the schoolyard to keep cows out, and they cleaned the school before the beginning of a new term.

The adults formed a social group which they called The Double R-Cs (an acronym for Red Rock-Cordova Club.). Their meetings were held in the schoolhouse. From *The Three R's* school paper, April 9, 1957: "This coming Tuesday evening, April 9, is the final meeting of the R-Cs for this school year, with the exception of our picnic on the last day of school. The entertainment committee has nice plans for this occasion. Sandwiches are to be brought for refreshments. Come and have a good time."

An innovative project carried on by the school board was to make the schoolyard a playground and picnic area during the summer months for the community to enjoy, instead of renting it out as pasture. It was mowed, picnic tables added, as well as some playground equipment. It became a wonderful park-like place for summer outings.

School musical and dramatic programs at Christmas and other occasions were attended by practically everyone in the town and surrounding community—parents, grandparents, and friends met to see the children perform and to enjoy the company of the community.

The End—Suddenly and Unexpectedly

Mr. Van Arkel was rehired for the 1958-59 school year, with the prospect of 19 pupils. However, several families moved from the community during the summer, including Mrs. Harry DeHeer, who had a large family of school-age children, and suddenly there were only six pupils left. The State required 7 pupils for the operation of any rural school.

Late in the summer of 1958, it became known that the school would have to close, and the remaining pupils be bussed elsewhere. It was a sad shock, the ending of a cherished institution when the school closed after 112 years of operation. It was traumatic for the children who had to transfer to Monroe, Knoxville, or other school. In later years those who had attended the Red Rock School would say that the training they received in the school they entered was inferior to what they had received in Red Rock.

Red Rock students, who in increasing numbers during the last decades continued on in high school and college, acquitted themselves very well. Red Rock School had done a good job in preparing them for further education. They became doctors, high school teachers, college professors, and successful businessmen. Unfortunately, these were the people who left the community, as prospects for making a living were no longer favorable in Red Rock.

With the closing of the Red Rock school, the focal point of the community dissolved. One woman interviewed said that the closing of the school ended the strong social ties that had before existed, as everyone was off to some other place for their school-related activities. The Red Rock school had been a place where everyone met, regardless of age and whether or not they had children in school. Now they didn't see each other very much any more. The "big family" feeling was weakened.

When the last store had closed four years earlier (1954), Red Rockers sorely missed their familiar meeting place. Closing the school was like a death in the family.

The schoolhouse stood empty for seven years, before it was sold and moved. During those years it stood as a mute witness of one-time better days in Red Rock.



Cecil Price

The deserted Red Rock School, 1960.

Chapter 12

THE RED ROCK CHURCH IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Our Church

“There’s a Church known to us in Red Rock
That is dearly loved both by young and old.
Here we work hand in hand for the Master,
And in His service, we find joy untold.

As the years come and go, we will not falter
Ne’er from Him shall our allegiance stray,
But with faith that is sincere and steadfast
We will follow where He leads the way.

—Joy Shilling and the pastor

Revival of the Church

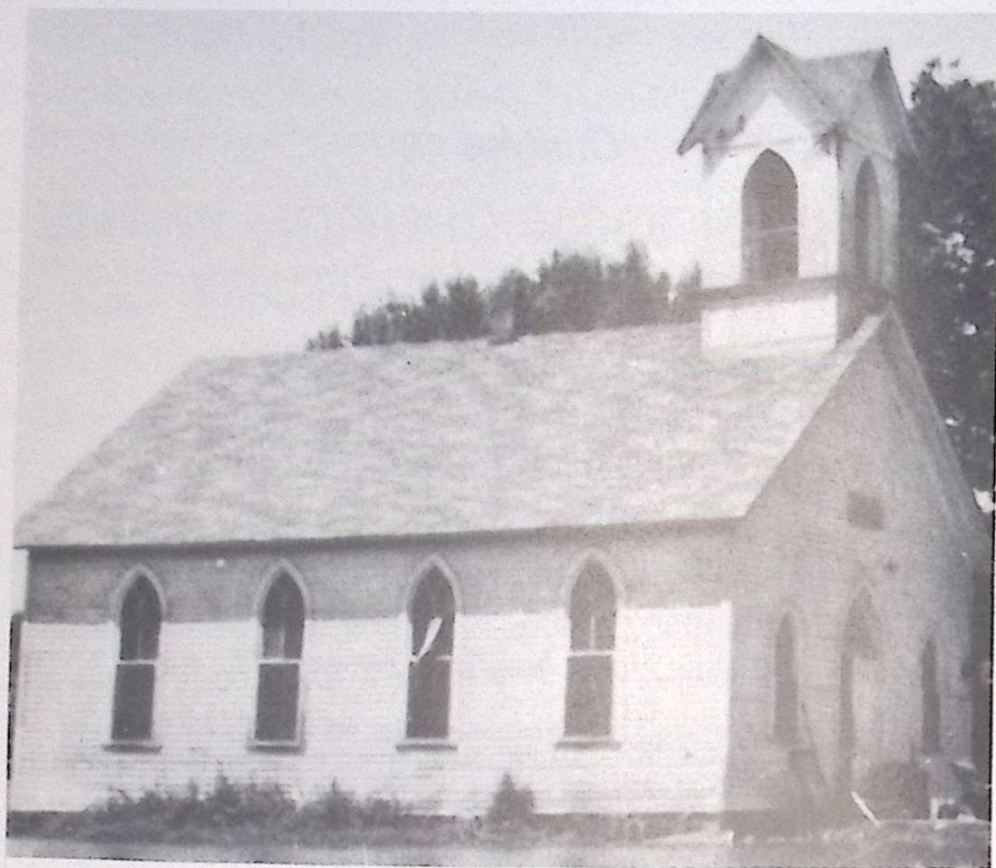
For many years, Red Rock had no church. They had torn down their original brick Methodist church built in 1855 and had disbanded for lack of interest.

It might almost be viewed as the real beginning of the Church when in 1890-1891, an evangelist named Craig Pippin came to Red Rock and held revival meetings. A great awakening took place. Many families came and declared their faith in Jesus Christ. The urge to hear the Gospel again seemed to be in the hearts of many, and there was an urge to build a church home once more. The LeGrands, De Mosses, Karrs, Fords, Shillings, Griffith Mikesell, and the Templetons were among those who spearheaded the “back to church” movement.

Services were held in the schoolhouse while they secured land for the building, and the new church was being planned and built. The Church would be independent of any mainline denomination and would be known as the Independent Evangelical Association. (*By many, however, it continued to be called the Methodist Church*).

In 1893, Mr. and Mrs. E. W. Starr deeded four lots to the Church for the sum of \$70. The site was in the highest part of town. Members of the Church

hauled the lumber for the new building, and it was constructed by volunteer labor. It was said that everyone who could drive a nail helped. The result was a small but attractive church building with a high graceful steeple and some beautiful colored windows.



Blanche Templeton

Red Rock Church

The Rev. Craig Pippen became the first minister, and he continued to serve the Church for several years.

Red Rock Church During the Depression Years

Membership in the Red Rock Church was never large, and Red Rockers found it difficult to raise the money to pay a minister's salary, particularly true during the depression years. Without a resident minister, people tended to look elsewhere for a church. During the depression years, however, when money and gasoline were so hard to come by, Red Rockers of various faiths met together in the Red Rock Church—Methodists, Baptists, Adventists, and Catholics. It was truly an ecumenical church.

In the 1930s, the Rev. H.L. Van Dellen of Pella (referred to as the walking preacher) traveled many miles on foot to visit country Sunday Schools in the area including Red Rock. The people of the rural areas and many from Cordova, which never had its own church, remember seeing him pass by, walking to Red Rock to the church.

At times, people of the church preached the sermon. We learn from *Cordova News*, August 13, 1936, "Andy Johnson preached the sermon at Red Rock

the two previous Sundays. George Dailey will deliver the sermon on this coming Sunday. Mrs. S. R. Boyd was the leader at prayer meeting last Tuesday evening." The Gospel Team, a small group of four or five students from Central College, Pella, came on Sundays in the '30s to help with the services. (*At least two marriages between Central students and Red Rockers resulted.*)

It was said that during the Depression, the men of the church more or less stopped attending. The conjecture was that they were either so discouraged at not being able to make a good living for their families, and so despondent at the sorry state of affairs in general that they did not have the heart to face the churchgoers. And they may not have had proper clothing to wear to church.

The ladies of the church were indispensable during the Depression. Without them, the church would have had to close its doors. The Ladies' Aid had been organized when the church was quite new, and continued to work for the Church throughout the years. It seemed incredible that the women could do as much for the Church as they did, because in the '30s money was hard to get and furthermore the women did not control the family purse strings.



Bernice Bosch

Red Rock Church congregation, 1929.

They donated hours of work. They raised money by sponsoring basket dinners, they prepared lunches to sell at farm sales, they sold dinners for threshing crews, they made countless quilts and other handiwork to sell, and they prepared food for ice cream socials.

The main objective of the Ladies' Aid was to take care of the expenses of the church. They paid the janitor, the electricity bill, varnished the woodwork, painted the window frames, later painted the whole exterior of the church, built a new chimney, purchased a new stove and took care of small bills.

The *Cordova News*, October 1, 1936, gives an account of a Ladies' Aid meeting, "Mrs. Hattie Johnson entertained the Aid at her home all day Wednesday. They embroidered quilt blocks, towels, and table runners, and sewed carpet rags. Present were Delight Vande Garde, Ellen Karr, Bessie Haning, Jennie Slykhuis, Rose Dailey, Maud Riherd, Alice Visser, Lizzie Reese, Tony Graham, Joy Buttery, Grandma Shilling, Ruby Ver Steeg and Cecil Price."

The Second Revival

Not only did the Red Rock Church survive the '30s, but some promising things happened. In the early thirties, a great revival (referred to as Revival II) was led by George Johnson, an Open Bible minister from Des Moines and his mother Mrs. Johnson, also an ordained minister. She was known as Mother Johnson. Many were baptized in the Des Moines River, and the church was filled to capacity.



Ruth Perkey

The Rev. George Johnson

In 1936 George Johnson married a Newton woman, and they decided to live in Newton. So he resigned his position at the Red Rock Church.

The church people were happy in 1938, when Mr. Gerald Vriezelaar of Otley decided to be their minister. For a time, he drove back and forth from Otley. Commuting being inconvenient, he built an addition to the storeroom, and he and his family lived in it until a building from Cordova was moved in and they remodeled it with new windows and a screened porch.

Unfortunately for the Church, Vriezelaar received a more lucrative offer from a church in Des Moines. He decided to leave Red Rock. He gave his last sermon on April 22, 1940, and the Church provided a potluck dinner afterwards to wish him farewell. The parsonage was rented out for a time. Then as the Church could not find another minister who would locate in Red Rock, they finally sold the house, and it was moved away.

The Centennial of the founding of the Red Rock Church on July 4, 1855, was celebrated July 4, 1955—though the Church had been disbanded for many of those years. It was a gala day with 85 people present, some of them coming from as far away as Kansas City and Omaha. The Baptist minister from Knoxville led the morning service in the church. It was followed by a bountiful dinner, served on tables placed under the shade trees on the church lawn. A lovely spot. Following the dinner, a local talent musical was presented, pictures were taken, and games of horseshoe and pitch played by the men and boys.

The last resident minister of the Red Rock Church was the Rev. Ernest Dailey, father of Mrs. Hilda Martinache of the community.

Even though the Church was usually without a minister, it continued to mean much to the Red Rock people. Church programs at Christmas and Easter and other occasions, church dinner get togethers, Bible study meetings for the women of the Church, Sunday School sessions for the children, young peoples' meetings and parties, and prayer meetings during World War II provided solace and substance to their religious needs.

The Red Rock Church was the center for holy family observances. Weddings were performed there, though in the earlier years, it was traditional for marriages to take place in the bride's home. Baptisms were sponsored by the Church but often performed in the Des Moines River. Funerals were held, one of the last of which was that of Ethel Mary Hollingsworth, whose ancestor started the ferry across the river at Red Rock. It seems fitting that one of the earliest families would have one of the last funerals to be held in the church. Just up the hill from the church was the Red Rock Cemetery, where so many of those who made the history of the town are buried.

At least twice during the 1940s—1944 and 1947—the church served the townspeople as a haven from the flood waters of the mighty Des Moines River. People were evacuated from their homes and found refuge in the church for several days and nights. The church was near the bluffs and higher than the rest of the town.

Real religious fervor prevailed in the Church. The singing was said to be loud and enthusiastic and expressive of their zeal. Church member Joy Shilling's poem entitled *Our Church* (cited at the beginning of this chapter) reflected the people's feelings. Bertha (Mrs. Zack) Ruckman added, "I bet it is the sweetest church in the state." (Actually she said this because bees lived in the inner walls.) One member said that she had never found another church like this one in terms of friendliness.

Keeping the Church going when so much of the time they had no minister, as well their acceptance of all who came, no matter what their denomination, is a tribute to the people of the Red Rock Church.

Chapter 13

WORLD WAR II

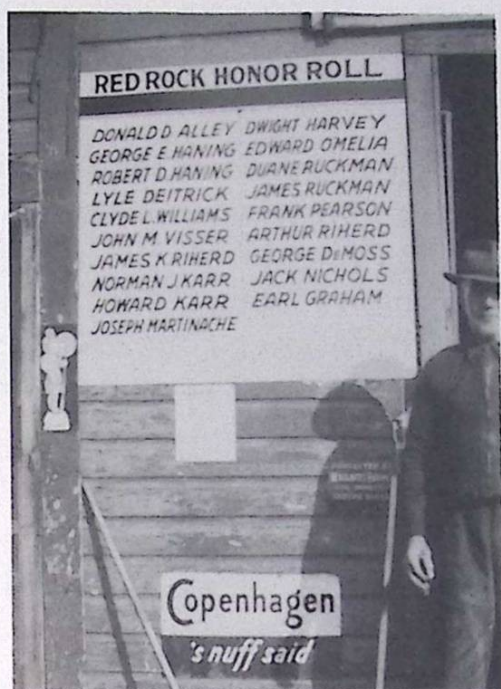
World War II brought many changes to Red Rock as it did to all Iowa towns. Red Rockers were shaken out of their depression thoughts, looking inward at their own considerable problems, to a situation in the larger arena of the nation and the world. It occasioned anxieties and sadness of separation of families as well as constant nagging fears concerning the welfare of their "boys" who were called into service.

For the most part, they did not question the rightness of the War. In fact, patriotism was at a high level and with it community "togetherness" in trying to meet the needs of the nation—by buying war bonds, producing as much food as possible, rationing, writing letters to Red Rockers in the service, joining together in farewell parties for those leaving for the service, and welcoming those men who were home on furlough. The women met in each other's homes and made comforters and "fracture" pillows for the service men. Prayer meetings were held in the church.

Enlistments were high, the glory and adventure of going to war overriding thoughts of danger, being wounded, and even possible death. The community kept an "honor roll" of those in service, posted on one of the stores. They felt involved in all those whose names who were posted there. Likely, there was no lack of topics of conversation for those older men who gathered in the stores.

Some of the men, not accepted into one of the armed services because of some disability, worked in agencies related to the War. Hough Mikesell, for example, first worked in the Government's CCC program and later worked in the mess hall of an atomic bomb project on the West Coast. He had tried more than once to get into the Armed Service but was rejected because he was handicapped by poor eyesight.

It was an eye opener for those who went into the service to see life in the wider world and also to those at home who received letters from faraway places, describing the life there—life in the Army and life of the peoples in Europe and especially in the Far Eastern arena of war, where life and customs were so different. The people at home listened anxiously to their radios, if they had them, to learn what was happening in the area where their own loved ones were engaged. World news and geography suddenly became important.



Maxine Alley

Red Rockers in the Armed Services, World War II. Honor roll is posted on Sherm Boyd's Store. He stands to the left.



Hough Mikesell

Hough Mikesell in the Army.

A shortage of labor on the farms meant overwork almost to the point of exhaustion for both farmers and their wives who were also pressed into service in the fields and doing chores. Haying and harvesting became anxious times because it was so hard to get workers. Tractors and labor-saving farm machinery became part of the answer. The horse all but disappeared in the '40s.

Women, as well as men, were going to defense plants to ease the shortages there. Among those who went to work in defense plants were Tommy De Moss, who quit his job in the coal mines, "Tink" Buttery who left his job in the Knoxville Veterans' Hospital, Roland Reed left his gravel trucking job, and Arthur Nichols closed his store. Nadine Reed, Colleen Deitrich and Delight Wing went to defense school in Newton to prepare for their jobs.

Perhaps there was no family in Red Rock so affected by World War II as that of John Martin Visser's, so it will be used as an example of how the war changed individual lives as well as that of the community.

One of the first from Red Rock to enlist was John Martin Visser, son of widow Alice Templeton Visser. He was known as a harum scarum young man, a brilliant fellow but rather undisciplined. According to his fellow Red Rockers, he was so lovable that there was no one who didn't like him. They laughed, but felt sorry for him, when he got into drinking and other scrapes, of which there were so many that he became almost a legend around town.

When John Martin Visser enlisted, E. O. Osborn, a Knoxville druggist-poet wrote of him in this poem:

Johnny Visser

"If I could find the proper words, With them I would portray
A picture that would tell far more Than sentences convey.

I'd paint for you a farmer boy; A strong and rugged youth,
And every shading of the brush Would help reveal the truth.

You'd see him in his uniform In front of Uncle Sam
A volunteer who heard the call, And said, "Well, here I am!

I've been a rounder, Uncle Sam, And might as well confess,
I've caused a lot of grief at home By drinking to excess.

But I've made up my mind to quit, And join the colors now
And help put Hitler in his place, And end this foolish row!

I see my mother in her home, Within her easy chair,
And Hitler's hawks are overhead To drop their bombs right there!

I'm ready now to settle down, And do whate'er I can,
So put me where I'll serve the best To prove I am a man!"

(Osborn, n.d. 106)

John Martin went to Georgia for training to become a bombardier. He obtained further training in England and served on the war fronts of France and Germany.

While in England, John Martin Visser met Harriet Hayton of Beeford, a beautiful personable young lady, and they were married in February. John had several months more to serve in the Army so she found employment near his camp. When he was discharged, he insisted she come as soon as possible to join him in Red Rock. She was soon to have a baby, and John Martin said he wanted his son to be an American citizen so he could some day become the President of the United States.

Harriet's arrival in January, 1946, was exciting for the Red Rockers, and they liked her at once. John and Harriet moved into the farmhouse with John's mother, about a mile north of town. Harriet was excited about living in Iowa. Their son turned out to be a daughter, whom they named Margaret Ann. A

couple of years later, baby Jean Alice arrived. As soon as it was possible to do so, Harriet became a U. S. citizen.



Jean Visser McKay

John Martin Visser and English bride at home on a farm one mile north of Red Rock.

Her adjustment to her new country was perhaps better than John's as he returned to quiet little Red Rock after the excitement of the war front. He was restless and tried many types of employment, but did not stay long with any of them.



Jean Visser McKay

Harriet Visser in the Red Rock Store. Linda Deitrick is helping her recognize U.S. coins.

He enrolled at Central College in Pella for pre-medical courses, while Harriet took over some of the farm work. His mathematics teacher, Dean H. W. Pietenpol, wrung his hands in dismay when John dropped out of college at the end of the semester, saying that John was the most brilliant mathematics student he had ever known.

John invented several labor saving devices—a post hole augur and a fence tightener, for example, but did not bother about getting them patented. He built creative playground equipment for several rural schools. He opened a car body painting business, only to abandon that project. He started drinking again.

Tragically Harriet developed an incurable cancer. She had many hospital stays and treatments but nothing helped. Finally, her Red Rock friends and

neighbors raised funds for her sister Dora to fly from England so as to be with Harriet in her last days. Before Harriet died, she asked that her young daughters remain in Red Rock with family rather than being joined with hers in England. She requested that she be buried in beautiful T'lam Cemetery on the Des Moines River, next to her mother-in-law, Alice Templeton Visser. The community mourned when Harriet Hayton Visser died on March 29, 1956, at the age of 39.

The tragedy of the John Martin Visser family was not yet ended. Three years after Harriet's death, John Martin had a heart attack and died on September 1, 1959. He was 43. The days that followed were anxious ones for daughters Margaret, 13, and Jeanie, 12. They knew the Templeton relatives were discussing what they should do with the little girls, now without parents or home. Sarah Jane Templeton and her husband Dwight Harvey and daughter Celia agreed to take the girls into their home and family. They proved to be wonderful parents to the girls, seeing them through high school and college.

Daughter Margaret Ann died a tragic death in 1969. She was 23. Jean is now Mrs. Dan McKay of Knoxville, and they are the parents of three children.

Through all of the vicissitudes in the Visser family, the Red Rock community was involved in a large way and came forth with tremendous support.

Permanent After Effects of the War

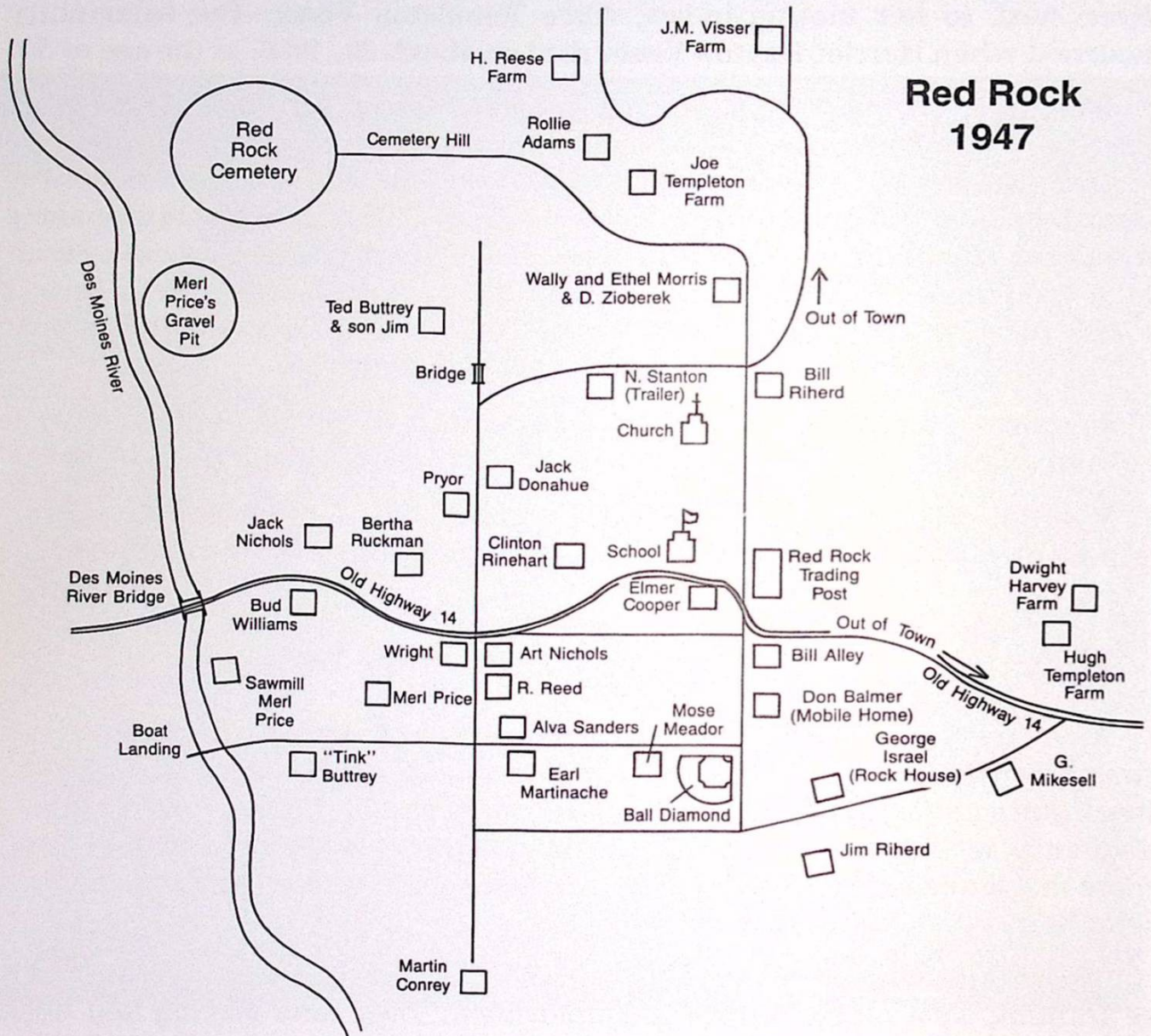
Eventually, the war was over and families were reunited with their soldier sons. Life went on, but life had changed. Instead of a tight little village, pretty much sufficient to itself, Red Rock had become a part of the world. Its members, women as well as men, were working outside their village. Farms had become more mechanized and less dependent on human labor, thus displacing the sons who had returned home from war.

The young people were looking to advanced education, college or other kinds of training, as a hedge against unemployment. They were leaving Red Rock "to seek their fortunes" elsewhere. Red Rock was behind them, but certainly not forgotten.

Many of the older people felt lost as life quieted down following the War, and there were no longer opportunities for profitable employment at home. The town stagnated.

As for the farmers who lived outside the town, life was perhaps better than it had ever been. The war had brought them prosperity. They bought more land, enlarged their livestock operations, and bought a great deal of big, expensive, sophisticated machinery. They built new homes or modernized the old homes. The countryside no longer looked the same.

And the town and its people would never be the same.



Map by Joan Martinache Ver Steeg
(not to scale)

*The bridge was heavily damaged by the Flood of June, 1947, and had to be demolished (another setback for Red Rock). This meant that Old Highway 14 (shown on above map), which was the road to Knoxville, had to be relocated. A new section of Highway 14 was then constructed to the east of Red Rock, and a bridge built there. Finally, before Lake Red Rock came into being in 1969, The Mile Long Bridge was built to span the lake which would be formed, and Highway 14 was routed over the new bridge.

**Old Highway 14 through Red Rock was a gravel road.

Chapter 14

FLOODS AGAIN

1947 Flood—The Beginning of the End for Red Rock

Hardly had Red Rock settled down again from the traumas of World War II when the June 12, 1947, flood hit Red Rock (referred to also in Chapter 10). It was the worst since the Flood of 1851, the "granddaddy" of Iowa floods.

The damage and dislocation were unbelievable. The sheriff and farm neighbors from Cordova and Otley, and the Red Cross all worked together to evacuate people by boat or row them to the Church for refuge. The new school built just two years before was severely damaged. Every home required extensive cleaning to get rid of the stench, and the deep layer of filth. Livestock died and newly planted crops were ruined.



Des Moines Register, June, 1947

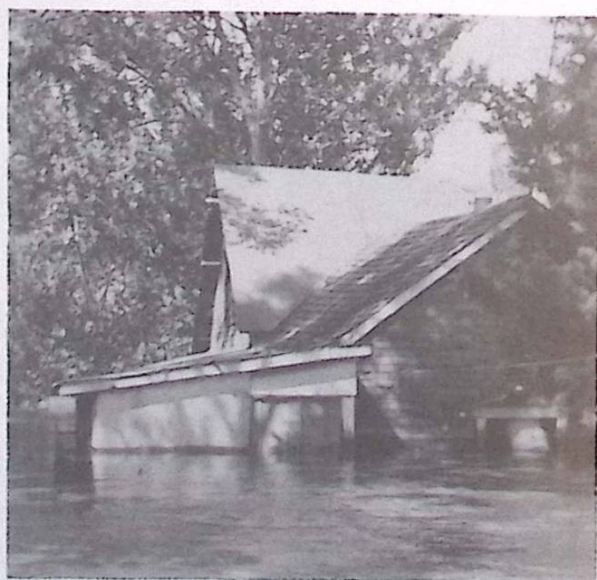
1947 flood victims find refuge in the Red Rock Church. L-R: Florence Ruckman O'Melia, Merle Price, Cecil Price, Dorothy Alley Ellis, Mrs. Zack Ruckman pouring coffee, Mrs. "Tink" Buttrey, Mose Meador. Standing in the doorway is Marion County Sheriff Jim Van Hemert.



Dorothy Templeton

In front of the store, flood of 1947. Front, l-r: Sherman Boyd, Jessie Williams Bruce, Daisy Williams, Mrs. Sherman "Tut" Boyd. Back: Mrs. Joe Stevenson.

The floods had a strange pattern of receding, and then a week or two later of rising again. As Art Nichols said, "There were really two floods. The first one came a few days before the big one, and then it went right back down. People started moving back into their homes. I told them that the water would come back. There was an old adage that said that 'if the flood leaves fish on the land, it will be back to pick them up again.' The water had left the whole schoolyard full of fish. Within a few days, the water was back again worse than before, but eventually we moved back in. Everybody always did. There was a saying we all used to say, 'Red Rock against the world.' We were a part of a culture that kept coming back. It's just like those people who have to live with volcanoes and earthquakes. They come back when it's all over with, and so did we. (*Knoxville Journal*, July 2, 1984)



Cecil Price

Mrs. Bertha Ruckman's home in the Flood of 1947.



Bill Gilbert

Cleaning the walls after the flood.

Death Knell for Red Rock

The 1947 flood precipitated the beginning of the end for Red Rock. In order to prevent such a devastating flood from ever happening again in Red Rock and towns downstream, Congress passed a bill in September, 1947, authorizing the construction of a dam on the Des Moines River just upstream from Red Rock. With this dam, Red Rock would never be flooded again! Red Rockers were jubilant.

Their happiness was premature. Surveying had already begun a mile away for the spillway for the dam, when in April, 1948, the Rock Island Corps of Engineers held a public hearing to discuss Howell Station, about ten miles downstream from Red Rock, as possibly a better site than the proposed one above Red Rock. If this plan were approved, doom lay ahead for Red Rock.

Despite many heated and bitter hearings and promises made and broken by various Government officials, Red Rock's cause was lost. However, it was September, 1959, before Congress finally decided to build Red Rock Dam at Howell Station, which meant that Red Rock would be flooded out of existence—instead of being protected from further flooding. (*Because the bill in Congress initially referred to the project as the Red Rock Dam, it kept that name even though the dam was to be built at Howell Station*).

Red Rockers didn't have much time to arrange for the future. John Kamerick was notified in October, 1959, that the Government had decided to use his farm

for the office for the dam and that they would be the first to have to move. General gloom and consternation reigned. Many tears were shed. Not only would the Red Rock townspeople be displaced from their homes, but farmers of the area would have to leave their land and their homes.

Flood of 1954

The Des Moines River was on a rampage again in 1954. Though it didn't reach 1947 proportions, when the flooding broke all records ever measured, (*there are no official records for the 1851 flood*), it was a time of great apprehension, and it resulted in untold loss. One who is not involved does not realize the great amount of extra labor a flood entails, first in safeguarding lives, second in protecting property as much as it is possible to do so, and then after the water has gone down of "picking up the pieces," that is, going back and cleaning up the mess in homes, yards, etc., repairing what has been damaged, and assessing the losses. Cecil Price in a special feature for the *Knoxville Journal*, July 1, 1954, gives an interesting day-by-day description of Red Rockers' activities during the flood time and of the caring and cooperation among the residents:

"RED ROCK—A newscast Monday, June 28, fixed the Des Moines River crest at Tracy at 21 to 22 feet on **Saturday**, June 26, and we here in Red Rock knew that water would be in many of our homes.

"That afternoon Bertha Ruckman and daughter, Florence O'Melia, started packing and carrying things upstairs. Bernice Donahue started taking up her flowers. Merle Price started tying down logs and getting cables ready to keep his lumber piles from floating away.

"Lloyd Karr drove to Knoxville for a sheller to get his 2,400 bushels of corn out of his crib in the bottomland.

"We all had a good night's rest **Monday** as the river started its slow rise.

"**Tuesday** morning, Ed Bumgardner's place of abode went by, pulled by a tractor. Washings went out on the line, and more fruit and small items were packed ready for departure.

"Sightseers continued to come, and Highway 14 looked like a carnival with cars parked on both sides of the road.

"Burt Karr owes Mose Meador a bottle of pop and Griffith Mikesell a dish of ice cream from bets as to the height of water.

"Hugh Templeton and Dwight Harvey decided to make ensilage of their 50-acre oat field and started that evening.

"Mrs. Jack Nichols took her furniture to Orrie Gilchrist's, put some on top of her porch roof and left for her parents' home on higher ground.

"Duane and Ione Ruckman backed in a truck and moved their household goods to Monroe. Mrs. Bertha Ruckman also left by truck with her household

goods for Monroe." *(The Duane Ruckmans never returned to Red Rock to live—they had had enough, but Bertha Ruckman, their mother, did go back after the waters receded).*

"**Wednesday** morning corn shelling and oat harvesting began in earnest. The Templeton-Harvey crew finished the job at 11, Wednesday evening. And none too soon for by Thursday morning, the long fingers of water were well over that ground.

"C. L. (Beany) Perkey decided to make ensilage of some alfalfa. Word got out and hill farmers from Otley helped. They debated about the oat crop but took a chance. They shouldn't have, for the water covered that field.

"More house plants were taken up and garden produce given away. Mrs. Art Nichols divided fresh cabbage with neighbors. Tomato plants were put in flower pots, and geraniums, other flowers, and cabbage plants were transferred to the tops of their storm caves, and the Elmer Coopers began to bring things out of their basement. Daisy Buttrey called for a truck as the river continued to rise an inch an hour.

"**Thursday** morning the river rose at the rate of 2 inches an hour. Fishermen with all kinds of equipment were stalking about in hip boots. A policeman was needed to direct sightseer traffic at the store. Many stakes were set out to measure the rise in the water level.

"Mrs. Kenneth Riherd moved most of her things upstairs and Huff Mikesell, in a very low part of Red Rock, made ready his trailer, and it was pulled to the road. Chickens and pigs were moved in the night by the Grover Williams family to the Templeton farm, after they set their alarm clock to ring every two hours. Mose Meador had to get out, and Roy Mikesell and Merle Price with trucks moved the family to the church.

"The Riherds awoke at 3:00, **Friday** morning to find water in their yard, and they called for a pickup. The water came in fast, and the town filled up rapidly. Marion Rinehart of the Trading Post was busy putting up canned goods on high shelves. Charles Hodgson, Lloyd, and Norman Karr responded to 4:30 a. m. calls to get things up and out.

"A trip by Arthur Nichols and Merle Price to Dunreath and Percy brought evidence (*which turned out to be false*) that the water was falling. Tension in Red Rock eased. Children Friday morning played in the water in the grader ditches, swam and rode bicycles. Some called the telephone company to shut off the incessant ringing.

"A call to the Weather Bureau in Des Moines Friday morning brought the word that the water was NOT falling, but instead that the crest at Red Rock might be as high as a foot lower than in 1947, the all-time record. That brought the town to life. Telephone lines were jammed with calls from folk in the hills offering to help. The drop at Percy the day before had been caused by levee breaks.

"Among those who moved at that time were the families of Elmer Cooper,

Clinton Rinehart, Marion Rinehart, Grover Williams, Arthur Nichols, Griffith Mikesell, Martin Riherd, Jack Donahue, Clares, and Roland Reed.

“Sightseeing traffic became so heavy that a man in a truck had to be put on the road near Highway 14 to keep cars out. School house seats, new last year, were taken to higher ground.

“By Friday night the town was all dark. Stars reflected on the water just outside our windows (the Price’s), and our motor boat was tied to the front porch. The basement was full of water, and the back porch sill was getting wet as the water crept higher.

“At 2 a. m. **Saturday** the rise stopped! By morning it had fallen about three inches. All the cars, trucks, tractors, and engines in Red Rock were parked along the grade.

“Folk started moving back on **Sunday**. Householders began cleaning out the mud. The water was in homes at depths varying from a few inches to 24 inches in the Mose Meador home, and 18 inches in the Lawrence Meador trailer.

“We are thankful that the crest was 41½ inches lower here than in 1947. Gardens are gone, pastures are covered, the well-kept school grounds are a lake, but no one is missing.”

It would take a long time to shovel the slime and mud out of the houses. Floors were bulging and would need to be pulled up. Painting of the walls was a must. Any clothing and bedding that got wet must be washed. And all had to be done rather quickly so the stench would not be permanent.

The farmers who lived in the area were soon to know how discouraging the prospect was for a good crop that year. The bottomlands would be wet and unworkable for a long time. Albert Waardhuizen’s tractor was buried in a mud hole, perhaps other people’s machinery, too. The fields were strewn with trees and limbs and some old buildings and boards. The task ahead was mind boggling. The labor to clear off the debris was overwhelming. Time was of essence. It was already July, when corn usually stands knee high or more, and oats are about ready to be harvested. Everything now needed to be replanted, and it was doubtful whether there was enough time for crops to mature. The losses would be overwhelming.

The flood of 1954 was not the last one. Every few years, destruction and filth swept into Red Rock. As one woman who herself lived on higher ground said, “I don’t know how many times in my life I’ve had to go in with mop pail and rags and help Mrs. R. clean her house after a flood.”

A *Des Moines Register* newsman who questioned Mrs. Olive Mikesell as to why they didn’t move out gave this account of his interview: “Mrs. Olive Mikesell, 68 and blind, was born in the old unpainted house in which she still lives. Her deceased husband’s family had lived in Red Rock since 1843. Her forbears came in 1857. ‘I don’t mind the river. I like it to wet my feet every once in a while,’ said the barefooted woman with the long gray pigtails.”

Chapter 15

THOUGHTS ON LEAVING BEAUTIFUL RED ROCK

“...and the firmament showeth His handiwork.”

Psalm 19:1

In 1960 when Red Rock's days were indeed numbered, people realized more than ever what a beautiful land it was that they would soon be forced to give up. Mrs. Cecil Price in her weekly Red Rock News column in the *Knoxville Journal* described some of those wonderful scenes which they would never see again—at least from the vantage point of their own home. Following are some of her musings—written in 1960—concerning the rhythms of the seasons:

“Jan 11. The more than 3” of rain this week raised the river quite fast and all of the snow is gone. Thursday morning several state highway men worked on the bridge with heavy ropes keeping debris away from the bridge. Most of the water that backed into the low places froze over and as the river fell rapidly on Friday night, it left a crest of ice that kept cracking and falling and making an eerie sound in the night.

“Feb 18. It was another eerie night in Red Rock on Friday night as the fog moved in from the river in the below zero weather. First the tops of trees weren't visible; then the fog moved to the ground, leaving only the tops of the trees visible. Slowly, it spread out in a long slim line letting us see over and under it. It was constantly changing and finally seemed to settle on the ground and dissipate. Saturday morning our countryside was a veritable fairyland. Never have we seen it more beautiful. The heavy frost colored everything, the gooseberry bushes, the plum thickets, the tops of the Chinese elms, and the weeping willows were pretty. The bluffs all around us were so beautiful they should have been painted on canvas.

“Feb. 18. I heard a chickadee singing his spring song here this morning in the cold and snow.

“March 10. The second coldest day I can remember was last Saturday when we awoke early to a reading of -25 degrees. As the weather gets colder and the snow deeper, more and more birds come to eat. Usually the birds are particular in wanting to eat by themselves, but on Saturday when the temperature

was still below zero, we noted a blue jay and a yellow bellied woodpecker eating together from a small sack of suet so we know they were hungry.

“April 20. Several of our county roads have ‘Slow’ signs and some still have ‘Closed’ signs as soft spots combine to plague the road maintenance men. One of the worst, most impassible places in our community is near the Andy De Joode farm. Many loads of gravel have been put on the road leading to Dunreath filling in some of the soft spots.

“April 26. The river is still out of its banks here in the lowlands. Water is backed up in the creek as far as the Core bridge.

“May 5. Several mushrooms were found in our community on Sunday, as warmer weather came and folks enjoyed the great out of doors. The orioles returned to Red Rock Thursday and have already started their nest. We have also discovered a dove’s nest, blue jays, and several robins. We took the suet sack down but the birds still come.

“May 12. We direct the many sightseers who are driving around on Sunday afternoons to take the road along the bottom, for the scenery is so pretty along the red rocks, and there is much livestock in the pastures, and later the growing crops will be a picture to behold.

“May 12. The river rose rapidly Friday night and Saturday, and by Sunday had covered most of the farmland across the river from Red Rock and was running across the big bottom in several places. Most of the farm ground was plowed and about ready for planting so it would wash much of the good top soil on down the river.

“May 19. Monday evening as we came from Knoxville, a young fox crossed the road in front of us on the Hollingshead Hill. Much wild life is in evidence in our community. Mr. and Mrs. Roy Karr watched four deer in their field near Cordova. Beautiful creatures and not a bit afraid. There is a deer trail on the bluffs across the river.

“May 19. Four of the largest mushrooms we have ever seen were given to us on Sunday by Don Balmer who found them growing beside a big log. Two of the largest were too big to fit into a tea cup. We have been scattering the cleanings from mushrooms around wood piles or an older tree and another year we will have mushrooms. We are trying it but won’t tell you where the ‘patch’ is, and we’ll report next spring on our success.

“June 2. We had 3 inches of rain last week which caused the river to rise rapidly. We drove to Des Moines on Wednesday and stopped in to see the Weather Bureau. They told us the crest would be at 19 feet at Tracy, which usually puts water all around and in our basement. By Friday, all of the basements and caves had several inches. Hail fell on Thursday and Friday, ruining what flowers were in bloom and taking leaves and small limbs off the trees.

“June 16. The wild roses are a riot of bloom along the roads that are not sprayed. It’s good to see their bright pink blossoms. What more beautiful flower could we have for our state flower than the wild rose?

“June 16. The strawberry patches are yielding their bright red fruit to grace our tables. It makes our hearts heavy at the thought of having to leave our good black soil for some unknown place.

“June 23. Many motor boats have been in evidence as folks take advantage of the nice June days to see the scenery all about.

“July 7. We have been entertained several nights this past week by frogs crawling around on the window screens after bugs that come to the light. We find they are very particular which kind of bugs they eat. They have no taste for the corn borer moth.

“July 7. It's so peaceful on the side roads where we hear bluejays, redbirds, dickcissell, and catbirds. The roadsides are pretty with yellow blossoms, sweet clover, and deep blue alfalfa blooms.

“July 14. A near tornado on Tuesday in Red Rock about 4:15. Many trees were topped or blown over.

“Aug. 11. Several of the big cicada wasps have been seen in Red Rock. The air rings with the songs of the cicadas in the evening, and their shells are on everything where they have hatched.

“Aug. 11. Two members of our community tangled with bees the past week. Both Mrs. Iona Gamble and James Templeton had to see the doctor for treatments for infection.

“Aug. 18. We must be going to have a very early fall for many large flocks of blackbirds have been flying over, and the only song bird we have that sings to us during the day is the happy little wren. We had a nest of catbirds in the lilac bush, and they sang most of the summer, but now they seem to be gone. Many hummingbirds continue to come to the flowers. They usually leave about the last of September.

“Sept. 1. The frogs continue to entertain us each evening by crawling on the screens and glass after bugs. We find the mice are moving into the house and taking over. And as we went to the kitchen Sunday evening to fix supper, a large toad sat blinking up at us. We took him to the strawberry patch.

“Sept 22. We had 1½” of rain on Sunday and Sunday night. This greatly cleared the air of the pollen and dust and made the weeds much easier to pull. The late fall flowers are bright and beautiful as are the plants along the roadsides. We finally found some elderberries that hadn't been sprayed and picked a large panful, mixed them with grapes, and now have the juice canned for nice jelly when the snow flies.

“Sept. 29. Roy Karr and Hugh Templeton fished on Friday night and caught a nice string of fish. Daily, fishermen line the bank, and some nights campfires burn brightly as folks enjoy the last of the summer.

“Sept. 29. The ducks and geese are flying daily, and we can hear them calling during the night. Last week, there seemed to be very few birds in our trees,

but Sunday morning several different birds came in from the north, and now we hear them chattering in the early morning hours.

"Oct. 13. The fine warm weather of the past week has brought several violet plants into bloom and the tamarisk bush also yielded a nice bouquet. A large flock of robins is making Red Rock their home for the time being.

"Oct. 20. The Saddle Club of Pleasantville brought their horses to the Blaine School on Sunday and then rode back by way of the bottom road. Someone must have left their little black dog, for he was sitting along the road howling Sunday evening.

"Oct. 20. An unusual flock of birds has spent the last week along the river. They look like penguins, only are a dark brown in color. We awakened Friday morning to the sound of a lone robin singing and we see many flocks of ducks daily.

"Oct. 27. A heavy frost covered everything Wednesday evening, and now everyone is busy getting gardens cleared off, all bulbs dug up, and raking leaves. Beets and carrots are in the caves, leaving only cabbage outside. The robins continue to sing daily, and great flocks of geese are heard overhead. There are now two frogs in the basement and we hear them daily.

"Nov. 3. Duck hunters come early these mornings and wait in the willows on the sand bars for the ducks to come. Lots of shooting but no report on how many ducks have been killed.

"Nov. 17. Several in our community went pheasant hunting, and all received their limit, some before noon.

"Nov 17. Everyone is working very hard getting in crops, cleaning off the flower beds, puttying windows, and putting up storm windows while we enjoy good weather. Several in our community are through picking corn and found the yield to be between 60 and 100 bushels per acre. Please pass the cornbread and the fried mush to help eat up the surplus.

"Dec 15. A red tailed hawk sat for a long time high in a willow tree and gave us all time to take a good look at him. There seem to be lots of hawks to catch all the mice. We have had a good many inside the cupboards and they are almost taking over the garage. We have no grain and wonder what they eat.

"Dec. 20. A Merry Christmas to all.

Chapter 16

RED ROCK'S FINAL DAYS

During the early 1960s, Red Rockers were "at loose ends." There were, by this time, only about 70 people in Red Rock, and they all had to think about making other arrangements concerning a new place to live. They couldn't begin any new project; they didn't want to spend money on improvements that would soon be lost. They didn't know how much money they could count on getting from the Government, so they could hardly move out and establish themselves in some other place. Many of them wanted to savor their last days completely, but little nagging anxieties about the future kept them from enjoying each passing day to the full. They couldn't believe that any place could match beautiful Red Rock.

Not all were enveloped in doom and gloom. Arthur Nichols and Merle Price planted little trees on their lawns. Even though they might have to move soon, they could enjoy watching them grow while they were there, and carpets of red, white, and purple violets made their places very beautiful in early summer. Diane and Linda Nichols were painting the trim on their house a sparkling white in 1960. (The Nichols house was sold and torn down in 1963). Other houses were needing paint more each day, but their owners were not willing to spend money on it because of the uncertain amount of time they could enjoy it.

The large trees in Red Rock were going down, making Red Rock look shorn and forlorn. The largest tree of all, a huge walnut tree on the Grover Williams property, was cut down and hauled away in the summer of 1960. Its welcome shade had refreshed many a Red Rocker. Walnut buyers from Des Moines and elsewhere were on the lookout for trees such as this one. The Red Rockers figured the trees would soon have to be cut down anyway.

It was not an uncommon sight when looking out one's window to see the Government negotiators calling on a close neighbor. Soon thereafter, numbers were tacked on their homes indicating that they now belonged to the Government. Appraisers offered a price for each property. The owners could accept this price (the price was negotiable to a certain extent—more than once the negotiator was threatened with a shotgun), or move the buildings out. Tears flowed fast and many agreed with Cecil Price who said, "I don't believe that we'll ever recover."

Neighbors Move

Most of the Red Rock houses purchased by the Government were torn down. They were not worth moving. Those who lived in trailers could, of course, move them out, but they needed to find a new site for them.

Mr. and Mrs. Vincent Clare, instead of waiting until they were pushed out, accepted the inevitability of the situation, ordered a van to load their household belongings and moved to Knoxville. They were the first to move out of Red Rock.

A large portion of the Joe Templeton farm north of town was to be appropriated by the Government so Joe and Mary were house hunting in Knoxville, where they bought a fine house, and very soon moved in.

Some folks moved directly across the river to a beautiful park-like area—Elmer and Mabel Cooper, Arthur and Lila Nichols, Sam Nichols (from Dunreath), James and Blanche Templeton, Tink Buttrey, and Harry Deitrick. These people would still live in the vicinity of Red Rock and also near old friends.

The Grover (Bud) Williams house was moved to a farm north of Cordova, and they moved to Knoxville, where unfortunately, he lived only one year before his death.

Townpeople noted each family's departure as they were notified to leave, and each time thoughts came to them concerning their relationships, which would never be as close again. These friends would now be living in Monroe, Knoxville, Newton, Pella, or elsewhere.

They noted the continuing neglect of certain properties as it was difficult for some families to find the motivation to work at keeping them up. Red Rock looked more and more unkempt. Broken windows and doors that hung on one hinge in homes vacated but not torn down added to the forlorn appearance. Telephones were removed as families moved, and as was said, "Our town dies a little more each day."

Red Rockers felt they were living in a fishbowl as many sightseers came every weekend to see the town for a last look before it was torn down or covered with water. A number of them stopped long enough to say that they had once lived in Red Rock or had visited friends and relatives there.

Old Landmarks Disappear

The Red Rock house, one of the chief landmarks as well as the symbol of the town, was dismantled. Some entrepreneur made drawings of its floor plans and windows, hoping to reassemble this historic building at the Hoover Birthplace in West Branch. Nothing came of this plan. Instead, chunks of the rock were gathered up by souvenir seekers.

A replica of the building one-half scale in size, fortunately, was reconstructed at Monroe along State Highway #163, using rocks from the old Red Rock House. Its plaque reads (in part):

“The model house here constructed is an exact replica of the famous Stone House of Red Rock, Iowa. The original house was built in 1850 from stone quarried near the town of Red Rock. This replica was built as a lasting tribute to the many years that the town of Red Rock was a home for many pioneer families, a resting spot for weary river travelers, and before that the habitat of American Indians.”

Highway #14 which went past Red Rock was being rerouted directly southward into Knoxville, bringing many construction workers into the area. A new mile long bridge over the lake which would be formed was being built a short distance to the east of Red Rock.

Red Rockers said their final goodbyes to their schoolhouse in 1961. More than 200 people attended a picnic at the schoolhouse, empty since 1958 for lack of sufficient students. People from many places came and went throughout the day and visited with their former schoolmates. They joined in a songfest, singing the songs they had sung many years ago. Arthur Nichols led in prayer. Some went to the church and tolled the bell. It was a sad-sweet day.

The schoolhouse stood empty for several years after that, a silent reminder of more pleasant days, until in 1965 it was sold to a contractor in Monroe who moved and remodeled it, making it into an attractive home.

When the Government decided that all of the town would have to go, that, of course, included the Church. How the Red Rockers hated to say goodbye to the building which had given warmth and comfort during the various milestones of their lives. It held precious memories.

The congregation debated whether they should try to move the church to higher ground, perhaps somewhere near Cemetery Hill, but decided that was not a practical solution. The Church was not in very good condition. The steeple had been removed several years before when the timbers had rotted. In the process, the once beautiful architectural lines were destroyed.

Furthermore, it was doubtful whether after the people had moved out of Red Rock that they would return for services. As it was, the church had an attendance of only about 30 each Sunday. They therefore decided to accept the Government's offer of \$5,500 for the building, and it was torn down.

The last act they performed as a congregation was to give this \$5,500 to charitable nonsectarian organizations. First, they gave \$500 to the Rev. Orville Dobbs, the old minister who had been coming from Newton to preach for several years for so very little. The rest was divided among the County Conservation Park, Sunnyside Crippled Children's Camp, Iowa Children's Home, Iowa Tuberculosis Society, Salvation Army, and the Boy Scouts. The piano and the pews were given to the Union Township Community Center.

Before the church was demolished, Red Rock people, past and present, had a last farewell gathering with more than 200 in attendance. Arthur Nichols said in an interview with the *Des Moines Register*, “After a picnic dinner together,

we went up to the church and sang old hymns. We sang, "Nearer My God to Thee," "The Old Rugged Cross," "Jesus Savior, Pilot Me," and "In the Sweet Bye and Bye."

It was still hard to realize that it would really happen. As Arthur Nichols told the *Register*, "This parallels Noah's flood in the Bible. They knew a flood was coming in Noah's time, but they just didn't believe how bad it would be for them."

The bell which always rang so sweetly may now be seen outside at the Visitors' Center of Lake Red Rock. It is mounted on a platform of red rocks—two fitting symbols of what Red Rock village had signified.



Harriet Heusinkveld

Memorial to Red Rock town, Visitors' Center, Lake Red Rock. The base is of red sandstone salvaged from the Red Rock House; the bell is from the Red Rock Church—both Red Rock landmarks.

Last Families Move

Merle and Cecil Price were the last to leave Red Rock. They were allowed to stay until 1966—perhaps because he hauled gravel from the river bottom, an important commodity in building the new Highway #14. The Prices moved to a farmhouse a couple miles south of Knoxville. Merle died in 1978. Cecil,

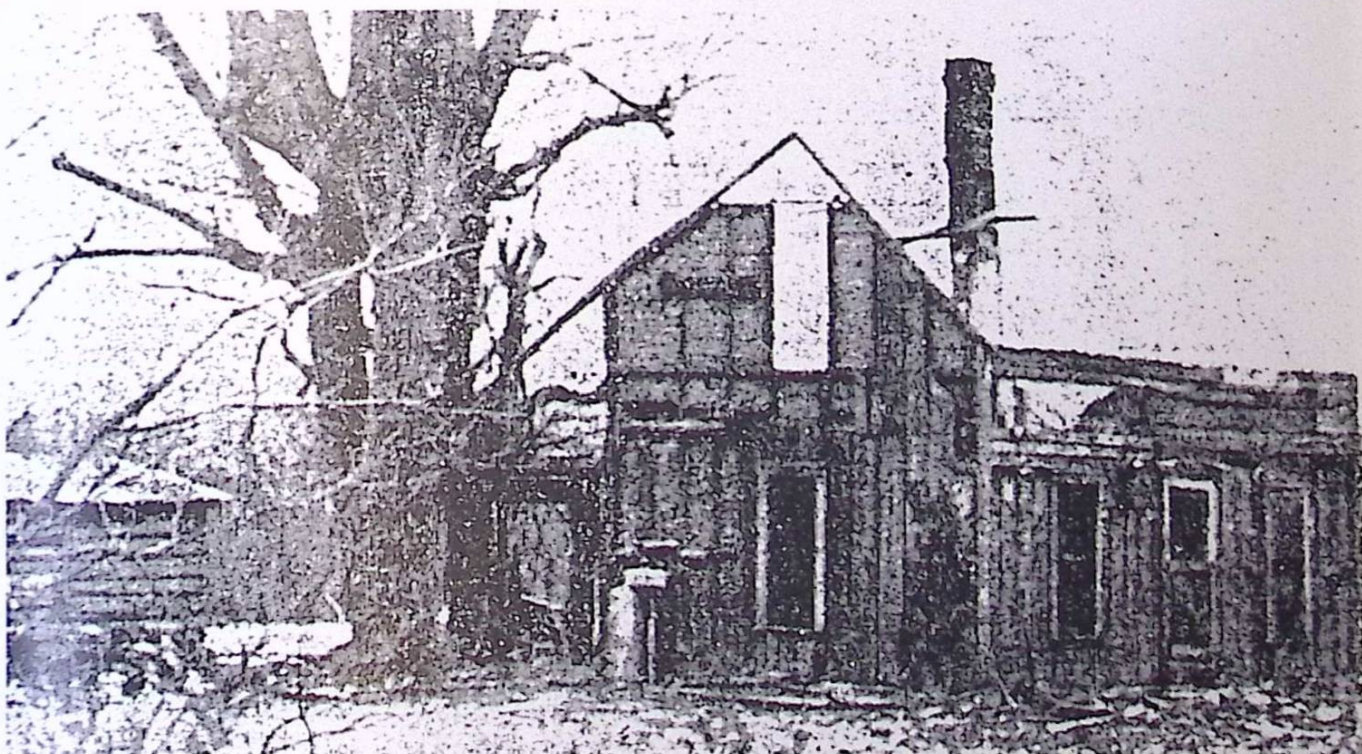
descendant of the Teters and the Karrs, both early Red Rock families, continues to lend her good work to her fellow Adventists in aiding the needy of the community. Merle and Cecil have been worthy citizens.

Families who left shortly before the Prices did were those of Bertha Ruckman and Ollie Mikesell—representatives of the two pioneer families in Red Rock who had come earliest and stayed to the end.

Bertha Love Ruckman was the widow of Zack Ruckman, grandson of pioneers Amos and Amanda Ruckman, and son of Eliphalet and Charity Ruckman. He died in 1947, having spent all his life in Red Rock except for a stint in the Spanish American War. He was a farmer, and like his forebears, he was interested in education. He had attended Central College at Pella, and he had served on the Red Rock School Board for many years.

Bertha could remember when the Evangelical Church was built in 1893, and it was very dear to her. At age 77, it was difficult to think of moving. Bertha's children had moved to other places—Duane to Monroe, Faye De Heer to Knoxville, and Florence O'Melia to Des Moines.

Ollie Clark Mikesell was the widow of Griffith Mikesell, son of John Huff Mikesell, the noted Indian trader in Red Rock's earliest days. Griffith died in 1960. Ollie also had lived in Red Rock her entire life. Her forebears had come to Red Rock in 1857. According to a *Des Moines Register* reporter, she "had water in her veins." She didn't mind getting her bare feet wet. She loved the Des Moines River. The prospect of moving to a new home in Newton had no appeal to her. Perhaps, a part of her reluctance was due to the fact that she was blind, and it would be hard to find her way about in a strange place.



Mikesell home vacated in 1965.

Knoxville Express

Her son Roy farmed the remnant of land left from John Huff Mikesell's original claim, and they lived in the unpainted house in which Ollie was born. A swarm of bees had been living in the house for several years. Before they left, they stripped their home of all usable materials and the remaining shell stood for several years.

Her sons Bill had already moved to Newton and Hough to Knoxville, and when there was no other alternative, Ollie and son Roy moved to Newton.

The End

Finally, all the people were gone. Only rubble remained. The town looked as if it had been devastated by some disaster.

In 1969, the dam was closed, water quickly accumulated behind the dam, and the lake started forming. What had been expected to take several years took only several days, and an almost "instant lake" was created—beautiful and wide in its expanse. Heavy rainfall and a great deal of snowmelt upstream accounted for the rapid, totally unexpected short time that the lake was filled.

It was the U. S. Government which had given to Red Rock its bright and promising beginnings by establishing the Red Rock Line in 1842. Now it was the U. S. Government which sounded the death knell for Red Rock by appropriating it for the Red Rock Dam and Lake.

Perhaps it could better be said that it was the River which had been the shining hope for Red Rock's prosperity and growth, and it was the flooding River which had been responsible for its destruction.

Many felt mournful and bitter, and still do. The end might be described by paraphrasing poet T. S. Eliot's words from *The Hollow Men*, (using the words "Red Rock" instead of "the world,")

"This is the way Red Rock ends,
This is the way Red Rock ends,
This is the way Red Rock ends,
Not with a bang, but a whimper."

Now even the site was gone, never to be seen again, but remembered, nostalgically and lovingly, Red Rock had had a great past.

All that remains of old Red Rock is the Cemetery. Though its site had been called "Cemetery Hill," it doesn't seem so high anymore because Red Rock Lake is so high. The Cemetery does not rise as high above the lake as it had risen above the bottomland. The Cemetery is a beautiful spot with many huge old trees scattered throughout. Lake Red Rock softly laps around its southern edge. Eagles and gulls fly high over the lake. Crudely carved red sandstones taken from the bluffs, many of them unmarked, tilt this way and that, indicating that some Red Rocker of long ago was buried there.

Recently, (July, 1993) Colleen Alley, daughter of Plato Alley, was buried there. She joins fellow Red Rockers, her parents, family, and old neighbors. The Alleys were one of the earliest families to settle in Red Rock.

The Cemetery speaks of many generations—among them five-month old baby Amy Bedell, daughter of the founder of Red Rock; Isabella Haynes McCollum, the young schoolteacher who was killed as she fell from her horse; Dr. Peter M. Johnson and his last wife; Dr. Schrader's young wife who was accidentally poisoned by a drug taken by mistake; Roland Reed who hauled gravel with Merle Price, and Roland's wife Frieda and their 11-year old son; Isaac Core, progenitor of all the Cores; and Ethel Hollingsworth Morris, descended from Red Rock's first ferryman. (*Family cemeteries in the area—Ruckman, Mikesell, Price, Karr, Teter, T'Lam, and others account for many of the other Red Rock residents' burials.*)

Seventeen years later in June, 1983, ex-Red Rockers decided to get together once more. They met in Elk Rock Park North (now Cordova Park), which is only several blocks east of the spot where Red Rock now lies under the water. What a happy day they had with lots of delicious picnic food and many a laugh as they recalled the "good old days" in Red Rock—with some sad thoughts, too, as they remembered neighbors who had since died.

1983 Reunion: Four Pictures



Edgar Van Ark

Gerald Arment, Jerry Martinache, Anna Arment, Dorothy Templeton.



Edgar Van Arkel

Darlene Karr, Earl Martinche, Sarah Harvey, Leroy De Heer, Jerry Martinache.



Edgar Van Arkel

Gary De Heer, Art Nichols, Dwight Harvey, Maxine Alley.



Edgar Van Arkel

Laurie McDonald Kendrick and Cale; and Jean Visser McKay and Aaron.

Epilogue — Rise of A Very Different Red Rock

Soon after the town was swallowed up by Lake Red Rock, the seeds of another Red Rock began to sprout. Hugh and Dorothy Templeton had sold some of their bluffs land just above old Red Rock, land not appropriated by the Government, to a private company. This firm divided it into lots, and the housing development called Painted Rocks came slowly into being.

Today, large, beautiful homes well protected from the high waters below, overlook the lake. A thick growth of trees and underbrush has taken over the quarries (now almost impossible to find) as well as the old farm pastures in the timber; and the lovely picnic areas in the red rock caves and bluffs which the Red Rockers loved and enjoyed so much.

A new people has come to live in the lands once loved and traversed by both Indians and Whites. Among the new people are commuting professional people, artists, affluent retirees from many places. The new people will add their own history to this place.

The old Red Rock must, however, never be forgotten. Its history gives flavor and perspective to all the area around. It is the heritage of the local area as well as part of the heritage of the State of Iowa.

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"I just don't know where we will go when we have to leave Red Rock. I would like to find another Red Rock to live in. If you want to go fishing, you just grab a fish line and go. If you want to go hunting, just grab a gun. We don't have all that turmoil and confusion you have in a big town."

--Arthur Nichols, *Des Moines Sunday Register*, July 23, 1961

"Think of all the mushrooms the Red Rock Lake will destroy." "I feel sad today because I visited the old hickory in the timber for the last time."

--Grace Karr, *Pella Chronicle*, November 12, 1959

Red Rock was Utopia, as far as many of its citizens were concerned, a Henry David Thoreau type of setting. Yet, time and again Nature dealt them brutal punishments in the form of floods. But its people never ceased to love their town.

Red Rock, first town in Marion County, was a rip-roaring town--the place where the Indians met the Whites in trade, a hard-drinking town, "the homicide capital of Iowa."

The intertwining of people's lives as they worked and played and worshipped together is related--until that black day when they were forcibly separated to make way for the great lake which inundated their town.

Dr. Harriet Hensinkveld, Professor Emerita of Geography at Central College, now retired, is the author of *Saga of the Des Moines River Greenbelt*, 1989; *Legends of the Magas of Yucatan, Mexico*, 1989; *The Best of Grace Karr's Cardova News*, 1991; and "Ghost Towns in the Central Des Moines River Valley," in *Take This Exit*, 1989, edited by R. Sayre.